

CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1:](#) The Women

[Chapter 2:](#) Status

[Chapter 3:](#) Experiences of Mission Life

[Chapter 4:](#) Work

[Chapter 5:](#) The Return Home

[Conclusion](#)

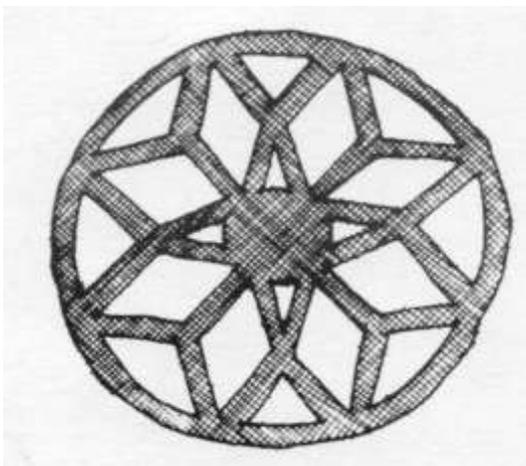
[List of Women](#) who served in the Solomon Islands



The Author

Daphne Ngaio Beniston is a graduate of the University of Auckland. She originally wrote this book as the thesis component of her M.A. in History. Her interest in the Methodist Mission within the Solomon Islands stems from a wider interest in the history of the Pacific and its peoples.

The Wesley Historical Society wishes to express its thanks to Daphne for her generosity in allowing the results of her studies to be utilised in this way and for her enthusiastic co-operation in the preparation of the material for publication.



INTRODUCTION

This study is a group biography. It surveys the lives of 106 New Zealand women who worked on the Methodist mission field in the Solomon Islands between 1922 and 1972. The main elements of the topic, embracing such matters as who these women were, what status they held, their experiences of mission life, their work, and their lives after their departures from the mission, are each addressed in separate chapters.

The Methodist mission to the western Solomon Islands began in 1902, as the outreach of the Australasian Methodist Church. Although it was run mainly by Australia, New Zealand supported the mission with both money and workers. Even with the independence of the New Zealand Church in 1913, the arrangement continued through until 1922. It was then that, to celebrate one hundred years of Methodism in New Zealand, and to assert its recent independence, the New Zealand Church assumed responsibility for the Solomons mission field. In that same year, the Solomon Islands Methodist District was expanded into Bougainville. This story begins with the assumption of responsibility by the New Zealand Church in 1922. It ends in 1972, four years after the Solomon Islands Church became independent in the form of the United Church of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

There is much general literature addressing the effects of missionary work. Such evaluations cannot be effectively performed without looking at the workings of actual missions. Attempts to do so tend to concentrate unduly on men and politics. The case with the Methodist mission is that women made up almost seventy percent of the white staff. It is this group that comprised the majority of the white workers, yet it is this group that has not yet been adequately historically examined. Literature specifically on this Methodist mission does point to the existence of the women, and the need to tell the story of their work. However, the part of the women in establishing and developing the mission has not been addressed in the context of their status.

An initial distinction must be made between two groups of women. The first women to serve the Methodist mission to the Solomon Islands were Pacific Islanders, the wives of Fijian and Tongan pastors. It is from these women that the name 'Marama', applied to all mission wives, comes from. Later, as Solomon Islanders were converted, local women also served as pastors' wives. The Island workers, both women and men, are significant in the development of the mission. By 1933, they were the majority of the workforce; the white staff numbered sixteen, while the Island catechists and teachers numbered 202. However, the problems involved in studying the Island women, the lack of accessible sources and language difficulties, necessarily limit the scope of this present work. Thus, only the European women will be addressed, or more specifically, the New Zealand women employed by the New Zealand Methodist Foreign Mission Board.

For the purposes of this study, 'New Zealander' has been defined as: those women who were living (or who had been trained) in New Zealand prior to their, or their

husbands', appointments. Thus Grace McDonald, who emigrated to New Zealand in the 1920s, falls within the bounds of this study. However, Mrs Binet will be excluded. She was born in Bath in England and, after marrying the Rev. Vincent Le C. Binet, left England to work on the Australian gold fields. It was from Australia that the two offered to serve in the Solomons. In spite of the couple's eventual retirement to New Zealand in the 1930s, they do not fall within the parameters of this study.

White women who were not New Zealanders are excluded from this study for one specific reason. While there is material available for the Australian and English women, it is limited in nature by comparison. Ethel McMillan's diaries are a case in point. McMillan was an Australian sister who served on *Choiseul* from 1914 until 1941. In 1941, the New Zealand General Secretary requested that McMillan write her autobiography. Instead, she sent her diaries, by registered post from the Solomons to Rita Snowden in New Zealand. Snowden was a popular writer and, McMillan felt, better qualified for the job. However, the diaries never arrived; Snowden has no knowledge of ever receiving them. According to oral tradition, twenty seven years worth of diaries written on *Choiseul* between 1914 and 1941 were lost in the post. As far as can be ascertained the diaries have never surfaced.

A lecture pad full of names and a folder of corresponding questionnaires that had been compiled by Nancy and George Carter were the starting points of this study. The groundwork that had been carried out by the Carters in this respect, and the access granted to the material, was instrumental in locating and identifying the group of women to be studied.

In the course of creating a biography of those 106 names, twenty oral interviews were conducted; nineteen were recorded and one was written. A pragmatic approach was taken in the selection of subjects. The three main criteria used were availability, consent, and time constraints. This system proved extremely fruitful, producing a wide selection of interviewees.

The problems of oral history cannot be overlooked. The presence of the interviewer can restrict and distort the evidence that is given, especially if concerns for keeping the interview 'relevant' are over-emphasised. An interviewer intent on getting answers to questions may often fail to recognise the importance of seemingly 'irrelevant' information or that a question may have been inappropriate. Also problematic are the memories of the subjects, coloured by their own views and the passage of time. These factors make oral history a very biased source, but in that it is no different from any other historical source.

The first step in guarding against the biases of oral history is to realise that they are there. Employed well, oral accounts can provide the historian with very useful and otherwise unobtainable information. Oral interviewing, especially of the married women for whom few sources remain, was vital. Without the benefit of these interviews, comment on them would have been extremely restricted.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Although the women are recalling events as opposed to recording events, the passage of time is useful for this study. The concern to look at the effect of missionary service on the women in chapter five was the result of material obtained from the interviews. The women themselves reflected upon the personal effects of their time in the Solomon Islands. Although the sources are not available for an in-depth survey of the impact upon the Islanders, they are more than adequate for the equally relevant question of the impact upon the missionaries. Other biases and inaccuracies are feelings and frustrations. One woman was unwilling to grant access to her pre-war diaries for this reason. Because a diary was often the only solace that a worker had, the detailed and sustained descriptions of friendships, arguments and divisions provide a personal, if skewed, picture of mission life.

Two diaries of Farland's were used. One was a typed manuscript of a journal dating from 1938 to 1940. Her second, dating from late 1941 until 1943, has an involved history. Farland did not evacuate from the Solomons with her colleagues in 1942 but remained behind Japanese lines, and during the period wrote her 'war journal'. It is intriguing that she considered it safe to keep a journal, detailing the visits, identities and whereabouts of various coastwatchers. However, she did take one precaution against the document's falling into Japanese hands. In December 1942, Merle Farland left the mission to assist the coastwatcher Donald Kennedy as a radio operator and decoder. Worried about the survival of her journal, she duplicated it and left the copy with the Rev. Wattie Silvester. She took the original with her '...in a parcel ready to drop in the deep [sea] if we meet trouble [Japanese]'.

However, the diaries cover only four women, all of whom began their careers before World War II. Another source contemporary to the period, and which covers a wide sampling of women, is letters. Correspondence between the women and their families, and the women and the General Secretary of the mission provide two excellent views. The first is personal, yet at the same time, careful not to disclose sensitive mission business. The correspondence with the General Secretary reveals discussions of formal matters which affected the women. They were not shy in informing the General Secretary of their own opinions, yet they showed restraint in divulging the same information to their families.

Official sources temper the emphasis of the women's view and provide an understanding of the official view. Documents from the application process and staff record cards, both incomplete, reflect how the Mission Board viewed the women. Other 'official' sources used were minutes of synods, Mission Board meetings and the Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. In addition, church newspapers and periodicals illustrated the light in which the women were presented to the New Zealand church.

Owing to a shortage of space in this publication, the footnotes have been excluded, and only a select bibliography included. A fully documented version of this work, entitled *The New Zealand Women of the Methodist Solomons Mission, 1922-1972*, is held at the University of Auckland Library.

Acknowledgements

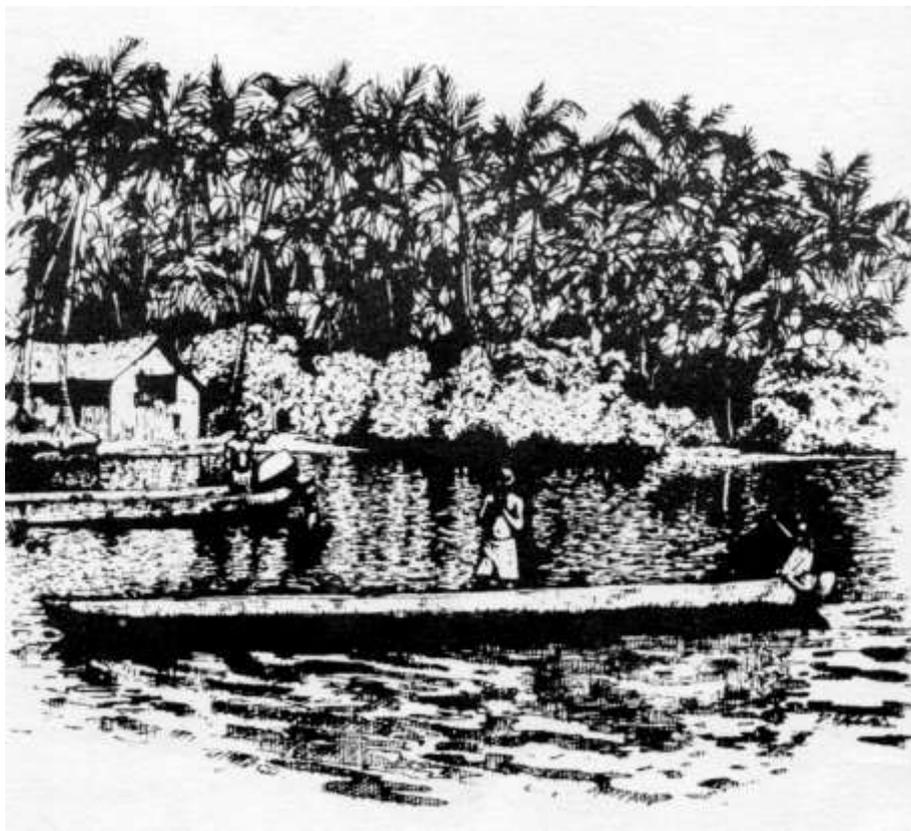
My especial thanks to:

Hugh Laracy for suggesting and supervising this study, the staff at the Methodist Overseas Archives, for their assistance and encouragement, the Smethhurst Fund of the MWF for funding a research trip to Christchurch,

Lyndall and Ian Gibson for their hospitality in Christchurch, the ex-missionaries themselves, especially Nancy Carter,

Effie Harkness, Beryl and Clary Leadley and

Dominic Hassan for his unstinting support and assistance.



1: THE WOMEN

'...I couldn't not go'

-Davinia Taylor, nee Clark, 1991

Between 1922 and 1972, 106 New Zealand women served the Methodist Church on the Solomon Islands mission field. Although they all served the same mission, the same church and the same God, it would be incorrect to view them as members of one homogeneous group. More than 'mission women', they were individuals. Examination of their backgrounds, what they had to offer the mission, their callings and the reactions of their families go some way towards illustrating their particularity within that larger category.

Early life

The women were born in a variety of places over a series of generations, beginning with Constance Bensley, nee Olds, in 1885 at Oamaru, and ending sixty one years later in 1946 with Gwendolyn Nagel, at Auckland.

The birth of Effie Harkness in 1909 to Australian parents living in Bendigo, Victoria, was ordinary enough. However, her life took a less normal turn a few months after her first birthday. Her parents, the Rev. Edwin and Mrs Dorothea Harkness left Australia with their two children, to serve on the Tongan Methodist mission field. Arriving when she was fifteen months old, Effie Harkness spent the next eight years with her family in Tonga. At the age of nine she was sent with her older sister to New Zealand for schooling. A Methodist family had offered to board the two girls, and it was with them that they lived. Edwin and Dorothea Harkness completed ten years of service in Tonga before they also moved to New Zealand, and served in New Zealand circuits. However, most women came from less unusual backgrounds.

Of more predictable upbringing were the significant number of women raised on farms; their early lives were marked in that little that would be construed as other than ordinary happened. Myra Fraser, born in 1918, grew up on her parents' Southland farm at Wyndham. The last two years of her primary schooling were spent in Canterbury, before she returned to complete her secondary schooling in Southland. She came from a family of three children, but most others were born into larger families.

Ada Lee, born at Ashburton in 1909, was the second youngest in a family of eight and grew up on her parents' farm. Her family was a close one, although it was rare for all the members to be home at one time. The close-knit family life which she experienced can be glimpsed in retrospect. In 1934, on the eve of her departure for the Solomons, she saw the film *Little Women*. Confiding in her diary, she made a comparison between the lives of the four March girls and her own:

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

The home life of the family touched my heart & my mind strayed back to picture my home at that moment - the home I had so recently left. Like many others I shed many tears in sympathy with the tragedies which disquieted the peace and happiness of that home.

Gladys Larkin's background contrasts starkly with Ada Lee's. Born in the early 1930s, Larkin was an only child. Although she was close to her father, she rarely saw him, as his job as a prison warden entailed shift work. Growing up on her mother's farm, and not particularly close to her, she developed a zest for outdoor activities. Gladys Larkin approached her family situation pragmatically. With a matter-of-fact attitude, she readily developed friendships outside her family.

Although most of the New Zealand women who served in the Solomons had been born in New Zealand, there were a number who were not. In 1920, at the age of seventeen, Grace McDonald left Northern Ireland and emigrated to New Zealand to join her father and brother, who had travelled to New Zealand in the hope of better prospects. In 1924, she entered Deaconess House in Christchurch, and after graduating, began a year at St Helen's hospital. On 27 May, 1927 seven years to the day after sailing from Liverpool, Grace McDonald left the port of Auckland for the Solomons.

Education

The education the women received was varied. Alice McMillan, born in 1916, came from a family of twelve. Her parents, who were farming in Dunedin, were badly affected by the Depression. In the late 1920s, Alice McMillan left school after standard six; her mother was unwell and her family could not afford to pay for a secondary education. Subsequently, she worked at home for two years, then found employment as a weaver.

However, it was not only daughters of financially struggling families who missed receiving a secondary education. Coralie Murray, the proverbial 'fiery red-head', reached the same educational level as Alice McMillan. This had little to do with her family's socioeconomic background, or her own desires. While her father was a seafarer-turned-market gardener, her mother was of a prominent Epsom family and had had the benefit of a private Anglican education. However, the Murrays did not believe that a secondary education was necessary for girls. So their daughter was taken out of school at the age of thirteen. Coralie was then apprenticed to a dressmaker, a job she 'hated'. Alice McMillan and Coralie Murray both reached a level of education which was standard for the time.

There were a few exceptions however. Lina Jones, born in 1890, did attend secondary school although this had little to do with the wealth of the family. Her father, a fitter and turner by trade, was employed by New Zealand Railways in Christchurch. Lina

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Jones, the youngest in a family of five, was a capable student and won a 'junior free place' in secondary school.

While several women attended secondary school, only a few attended university. Florence Howard was born in 1897 at Pokeno, near Auckland. Her family moved to Dunedin, where she later attended Otago University, completing a Bachelor of Home Science. She taught at Otago Girls' High School before marrying Dr Clifford James and accompanying him to the Solomons. Other women in the pre-World War II era did attend university but did not complete degrees. Effie Harkness spent one year at Otago University before changing to teacher training. Likewise, Myra Fraser took two university subjects, concentrating on obtaining her teaching qualifications. In the post-war era, Catherine Clifford and Lyn Sadler both completed their Bachelor of Arts degrees in addition to teacher training.

Christianity

The religious life of Catherine Clifford was very unsettled. She was born at Invercargill in 1935, into an Open Brethren family. In her teenage years, which were spent in the King Country, she committed herself to the Baptist Church, where she met Gordon Brough and upon marrying, joined the Methodist Church. Catherine Brough, nee Clifford, said of her faith: 'it was not intrinsic, it was learned, and conditioned.' Brough is atypical; the majority of the women were not merely adherents to the Christian religion, they seem to have been instinctively active in their faiths.



Early sisters with their charges.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Pat Hulks was born an only child in Birmingham in 1930. Although her parents were not Christian, she developed an interest in the Methodist Church at an early age. A local Methodist church was having its Sunday school anniversary at the school she attended, and Hulks was curious as to why she and her class mates had to move furniture on a Friday afternoon. She went to investigate. Liking what she found, she continued to attend Sunday school becoming more and more involved in the life of the parish. She recalled:

...in many ways, my association with that Methodist church, was a bigger influence on me than almost anything else.... most of my companionship most of my social life, most of my intellectual growth happened as a result of people at the church.

The commitment to Christianity that most women felt was demonstrated by the active part they took in church life. Pamela Beaumont is a case in point. Born in Ashburton in 1928, she was raised in a strong Methodist family. Her father was very involved in the church at both a local and a national level; her mother was active amongst women's groups; and her younger sister, Meriel, also served on the Solomons mission field. Pamela's own involvement reflects the deep commitment she made to Christianity. As a teenager, she became very involved in Christian groups both Methodist and ecumenical. Pamela taught Sunday school, led Bible class, was a Crusader leader, belonged to a missionary group and was Secretary of the North Canterbury Women's Bible Class Movement. At teachers' college she was an executive member of the Evangelical Union. The leading role which Pamela Beaumont took in the many groups she belonged to is typical. Commonly, the women in this study were not merely participants in church life, they were leaders.

Although many of the women were Sunday school teachers, the nature of their work varied considerably. Kathleen Shaw, born in England in 1927, was superintendent of the Sunday school at the Durham Street Methodist church in Christchurch, when she was in her twenties. Irene Cornwell, nee Shoosmith, born in Masterton in 1924, helped to teach Sunday school from the age of fourteen in a vastly different setting - at the local marae. As well, several women were qualified local preachers. Elizabeth Common was born in Oamaru in 1889. She completed her standard six year early in the twentieth century, then, because her family needed her help at home, she left school. Despite her limited schooling, Common sat and passed her local preacher exams in theology, English, English Bible and Church history, and was active as a local preacher.

At least two women studied theology at a formal level; they attended the Bible Training Institute. Alice McMillan first enrolled in 1940, as did her fiancé, Alister McDonald. Twenty two years later, in 1962, Janice Palmer, a nurse, entered the Institute in order to prepare for the mission field.

It is hardly surprising that most women were active church members. One highly recommended applicant was turned down by the Mission Board's Appointments Committee because of a lack of involvement in church groups. She was advised to become more involved, and to take up her application at a later date. She did, and was appointed to the field in 1954.

Skills

Although there were some women who had no professional training, the professional skills which the group as a whole had to offer were extensive. The majority of the women were trained church workers, nurses or teachers.

The earliest of the 'Solomon' women to become interested in working for the church was Constance Olds. She was born into a family of staunch Methodists; she became a deaconess and two of her brothers became ministers. Olds was in her mid-twenties when she first entered Deaconess House, completing her two-year training in 1913. Over the following six years, she worked at Wesley Church in Wellington. When she did go to the Solomons in 1919, she had had two years of training and six years of experience as a church worker. Three years after arriving in the Solomons, Olds married a fellow missionary, the Rev. Arthur Bensley.

The qualifications of Amy Coombridge were unusual in that, born in 1907, she grew up in an era when few women undertook professional training. Coombridge completed her secondary education and, after leaving school, was apprenticed to a chemist. Three years later she qualified as a pharmacist. In the interim, she had met, and in 1928 became engaged to, Clarence Leadley. Both were intent on working as missionaries and, believing that further medical qualifications would be of use, she trained as a nurse.

The medical qualifications of other women were not in the nursing field. Elizabeth Rutter, the wife of Dr Allen Rutter, had trained as a bacteriologist in the pre-war era. A post-war wife, Maureen Moor, nee Allen, born in England in 1941, trained as an occupational therapist. She later completed further training at the Christchurch Foundation for the Blind.

While several women were able to attain high marks in their nursing exams, percentages proved to be no measure of capability. Lesley Bowen, born in 1929, struggled with her nursing exams. In despair, she abandoned her general training in favour of nurse aiding and a six-month maternity course. However, she later returned to complete her training, determined to overcome her propensity to fail exams. She became more intent on succeeding the second time, after she had attended a Nurses' Christian Fellowship conference and heard addresses from two mission nurses. Inspired to become a mission nurse herself, she remained with her studies until she had become qualified. Consequently, one minister said of her: 'While not making a

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

first-class student she has, by sheer determination, earned her Nurses Badge. I consider this great work.'

As well as being qualified, several of the women were very experienced. Effie Harkness began teaching during the Depression. Jobs were scarce and teachers were 'rationed', one term on, one term off. In the mid-1980s, Harkness became aware of a desire to use her skills more effectively. Consequently she applied for a teaching position at the Blind Institute in Auckland. She was given the job, and the Braille alphabet to learn, on the Friday; she started teaching on the Monday.

Several other women were experienced in more than one field. Lilian Berry, born at Makino, near Feilding, in 1890, left school when she was fifteen to work as a seamstress. When her employer moved to New Plymouth with the business, Berry went too, later buying the business herself. In 1914, she began deaconess training, and by 1919 had completed her general nursing training as well. She gained a few years' nursing experience before she went to the field in 1922.

It was a similar story for Mary Addison. Born in 1924, she had spent her childhood on her parents' farm at Corriedale. In 1941, she left school to work as a shorthand typist in a legal firm, but resigned in 1943 to begin her nursing training. She was thirty one years old when she was first appointed to the Solomons, and arrived on the field with twelve years of nursing experience.

Other women were less experienced. Nancy Scott was born at Wanganui in 1928. Her father was a cabinet-maker; her mother a home-maker. Her decision to leave home and go to teachers' college was influenced by her mother. Pearl Scott had always wanted to become a teacher, but had been unable to train. Nancy Scott had the opportunity, and the desire herself, to achieve what her mother, due to circumstance, had been unable to do. After graduating, she taught for one year at a school with a high proportion of Maori students. The experience of teaching non-Europeans was one which she considered to be valuable preparation for teaching in the Solomons. It was for similar reasons that the Mission Board advised women considering mission service to work in small one and two teacher schools, to gain the experience of working alone. In 1949, at the age of twenty, Nancy Scott married her fiance, George Carter, and left for the Solomons.

The call to the overseas field

The directive 'Go forth and teach all nations' is an inherent part of the Christian faith; all who adhere to it are called to spread the gospel. Methodism was (and is) a part of this larger movement. Charles Wesley began the tradition in 1789; by the 1820s Methodism had entered the Pacific; and in 1855 the New Zealand Foreign Mission Committee was established. As well as being part of a Methodist tradition, the Solomons missionaries were part of a larger Christian tradition; their callings part of a

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

larger Christian calling. However, there were practical reasons which influenced the 'decision to serve in the Solomons.

One hundred and six women between the ages of nineteen and forty six, left New Zealand to work in Solomons. Twenty three were ministers' wives and fourteen were deaconesses - thirty five percent of the women in all. This suggests a strong connection between the overseas and the home fields, prompting the question: why did they leave New Zealand to fulfil the same role in the Islands?

The connection between the two fields is not as strong as first suggested. Of the wives, sixteen went to the field as newly-weds. They had not worked on the home field; their first experience of working as ministers' wives was in the Islands. Beryl Halliday, born in Auckland in 1899, attended school until the secondary level, when she left to join the work force. Halliday had always been interested in church work, and maintained an active role by teaching Sunday school. However, it was her engagement to Harry Voyce, a minister committed to serving in the Solomons, that turned her interest towards the overseas mission. Beryl Halliday and Harry Voyce were married in mid March 1926. They left New Zealand for Bougainville in April.

In the same year, 1926, Irene Crespin travelled to Bougainville. She was engaged to the Rev. Hubert G. Brown, who had gone to the Solomons in 1922. They were married at Numa Numa, after her arrival. However the couple returned to New Zealand in 1927.

It was often a shared commitment to the overseas field that attracted couples to each other. Although the Rev. Trevor and Mrs Gloria (nee Pickford) Shepherd were appointed to the Solomons as a married couple, Gloria had been interested in the overseas mission before her marriage. In January 1947, at the age of twenty four, she formally applied to the Mission Board for a position as a nurse. However, she met Trevor Shepherd at an Easter camp and striking up a friendship, discovered that they both had similar views on overseas mission service. The couple were married in April 1947, and 'following God's call' left for the Solomon Islands in May.

Of the fourteen women who had trained as deaconesses, at least eight had done so as a prerequisite for overseas service. Elizabeth Common is a case in point. Common considered the overseas mission to be the 'noblest field of labour'. In 1920, she wrote to the General Secretary, indicating her interest. Because she had no qualifications Common felt 'inefficient' and 'unworthy' of the position, and considered herself to be 'only a country girl with a few odds and bods of knowledge and experience gathered over 31 years'. Her modest opinion was not shared by others. One minister wrote of her, 'I know of no one who with training would be more suitable [as a missionary!...' Subsequently, she underwent deaconess and Plunket nursing training, and arrived in the Solomons in 1923.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

It was a similar story for Lucy Money. The genesis of her call, lay in a missionary meeting she had attended as a ten year old. Her interest in church work was sustained through teaching in Sunday school and leading Bible Class. From 1943 (at the age of twenty eight), until 1947, she trained to become qualified for work on the overseas field. In 1943, Lucy Money began her nursing training, graduating with honours and obtaining first place in midwifery in the country. She entered Deaconess House in 1946 to complete her missionary training, and left for the Solomons in 1947.

The link between the home field and the overseas field was not strong. At the most, the home field was seen as a complement to working in the Solomons. Ada Lee, a teaching sister, worked at the Rangiatea Maori Girls' School in New Plymouth when she was prevented from returning to the Solomons because of World War II. She explained her decision to teach there, rather than in a state school, to the General Secretary: 'I felt that connection with the Maori girls would perhaps help in the understanding more fully of our native peoples in the Solomons.'

For several women - like Lucy Money - the desire to become an overseas missionary had its genesis in their childhoods. Living at Makino in 1895, Lilian Berry was five years old when she heard that a local doctor's daughter had left New Zealand to become a missionary in China. That story sparked a fascination with overseas mission service, and a will to become one herself. Almost forty years later, Nancy Ball, the daughter of a fruit grower, was seven when she first felt a call to the mission field. Wanting to be suitably qualified, she applied first for nursing, but because she was not accepted, turned to teaching. Entering training college in the mid 1940s, she graduated and taught for four years leaving for the field in 1951.

However, there were several women for whom the call was unexpected. Myra Fraser's first experience of her calling occurred in 1950, when she was at a Christian Endeavour camp. While there, she heard 'a very powerful message based on the call of Moses to go to Egypt...'. She recalled that: 'That message seemed to burn into my heart & remain with me.' Several months later she read of the retirement of the mission teacher Lina Jones, and the urgent need for a woman to replace her. Myra Fraser knew that she was more than qualified for the position. She had ten years of experience, teaching mostly in Southland country areas, and was sure that she was being called to work in the Solomons. Despite feeling that hers was a genuine call from God, she recalled that:

It came as rather a shock as I was very happily settled into a good teaching position in Wyndham. I didn't know anything about the Methodist Mission in the Solomons but knew a lot about the Presbyterian Mission work as I had lived & worked in Presbyterian districts. I answered the call & on May 23rd 1950 landed in the Solomons, a very apprehensive greenhorn!!

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

It is hardly surprising that the call to mission service caught Myra Fraser unawares. She first felt it at the beginning of 1950; she arrived on the field less than five months later.

Likewise, Pat Hulks had 'never dreamed' that she would ever work as a missionary. Hulks, a self-confessed rebel, had two passions, drama and justice issues. The former was incompatible with her Christian commitment; most drama club practiced on a Sunday. The latter, justice issues, did not have the same conflicts employed in one job, she led a walk-out in demand for better conditions, believing that staff were not being paid enough. When she was twenty one, her family emigrated to New Zealand and she went with them. There, she trained as a teacher, and maintained her involvement with the Methodist Church. While attending an ecumenical conference she heard of the need for teachers and nurses in underdeveloped countries. She had the training, and could see no reason not to go. The motive for Pat Hulks was the underlying 'justice issue' which she saw. She considered herself as 'a teacher who happened to be working at a church school rather than as a missionary'.

One important influence in the lives of several women, were family connections with the overseas field. However, instances where a relative preceded another, are not necessarily close repetitions of the same story. An element of familial emulation manifested itself differently, for instance, in the cases of Effie Harkness, and the Beaumont and the Grice sisters.

Although Effie Harkness had grown up on a mission field in Tonga, her own career as a missionary in the Solomons was not an imitation of her parents'. While she was teaching at the Institute for the Blind in Auckland, Harkness was approached by a member of the Methodist Women's Missionary Union who asked her to consider serving as a teacher in the Solomons. The proposition took her completely by surprise. She recalled:

...at the beginning of 1937.. .a [Methodist Women's Missionary Union] lady...said there was a vacancy for a teacher in the Solomon Islands – was I interested?- 'Oh golly,'[I said] 'I don't know.' 'Anyway,' she said, 'you've got a fortnight to think of it. '...[However]! felt that that was something... I needed... to consider, because in the..Christmas holidays of that year, I had felt that...if I was going to stay with the Blind Institute there was a possibility of perhaps going to America to...get new ideas [about teaching the blind.]. I wondered about that, then in the February before I did anymore thinking on that line, this offer came...Well...during that fortnight...I'd think, 'No perhaps I'd better not,' and then the thought would come, 'No that doesn't feel right'...and then... I wondered, 'I don't know if I can do the job'...By the end of the fortnight I felt that that really was what I was supposed to be doing so I said yes.

Pamela Beaumont and Meriel Cropp were sisters who served in the Solomons in the post-war period. Pamela Beaumont first felt a call to the Solomons at the age of nine

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

after hearing the Rev. Arthur Bensley speak on the mission. Determined, she set out to prepare herself for work in the Solomons by training as a teacher, finally realising her call in the Bible verse: 'As my father has sent me even so I send you'. She applied to the Mission Board in 1948, and was accepted in 1950. Meriel Cropp, her younger sister, was called in a different way. She first considered the proposal when her husband was approached to take up a position at Goldie College in the Solomons in the early 1960s. Both Meriel and Jim Cropp were 'delightfully interested' in the offer. Finding 'no good excuse for declining' they accepted.



Mrs Joyce, Mrs James, Mrs Sayers and Mrs Bensley at the Synod at Bilua in 1929

It is easy to see the similarities between Audrey and Beryl Grice. They were twins, who had had the same childhoods, Christian upbringing, education and professional training. While neither sister grew up with a strong desire to become a missionary herself, the concept was not foreign to them. Daughters of the Rev. Reginald and Mrs Grace Grice, both women had been exposed to the world of missions while still children. Missionaries on furlough were often billeted with the family. However, the stories behind the decision to work in the Solomons was different for both sisters.

Audrey Grice developed a serious interest in working as a missionary while she was training to be a teacher. Although she was still in her teens, Audrey felt a desire to use her skills as effectively as she could, a desire that she found expressed in the Bible verse 'to whom much is given of them much shall be required'. Feeling that the New Zealand education system was well supplied with teachers, and aware of the urgent need in the Solomons, she applied to the Mission Board. Because of her age and

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

inexperience, she was encouraged to teach in country schools, and then to re-apply. She was appointed to the field in 1955.

Beryl Grice's entry into mission service took a different course; she became a missionary quite by accident, while visiting Audrey. Beryl Grice recalled:

I went out [to the Solomons in 1956] in the Christmas holidays for a six week holiday....And when I got there, they were very short staffed and they asked me could I just help out teaching. Here I was a qualified teacher on the spot, and it was too big a temptation....So...although I went out for just a six weeks holiday with one suitcase, I actually stayed for two years...

Beryl Grice's story bears dwelling on, as it demonstrates the inner struggle several women experienced. Even after completing and enjoying two years of unplanned service, Beryl was still unsure of her call. She did not know whether her desire to be in the Solomons was because her twin sister was there, or indeed whether her only interest in overseas service was because she had made so many friends at Munda. Grice returned to New Zealand in 1959, and had an unsettled year trying to determine what exactly a 'call' was and, if she herself had one. To help her solve her dilemma, the General Secretary suggested that she return to the Solomons for one year under the Order of St. Stephen. After one year on Bougainville, Beryl Grice was able to offer to stay on permanently, at last realising her 'call':

[It was] to love your neighbour as yourself, wherever you were, whether you were with the dustman or the person at the Post Office...That was God's call; it was the same for all people. So, loving my neighbour as myself, I had had that opportunity to go to the Solomons and I had seen the need and I had those qualifications, and that's how I could love my neighbour as myself at that point in time...

In cases of family tradition, the final choice remained with each individual. The family situation of each of those women did not dictate their decisions, but it did condition them. Just as influential as family background, were the relationships with friends.

Ada Lee had always had an interest in the overseas mission, through her connection with Bible class. She also possessed a streak of independence. When Lee attended teachers' training college in Christchurch, she boarded at Deaconess House. While she was living there, dissent broke out amongst a few residents, who then encouraged 'a serious violation of the House rules'. The matron reported that the 'leaders succeeded in drawing into their ranks all the girls excepting Ada'.

Despite her interest and independence, the initiative in applying for mission service did not come from Ada Lee herself. The proposition that she make a formal application was first suggested to her in 1934, by her close friend Hilda Longson. Longson had heard that Ruth Grant, a teaching sister, had resigned from the mission to

marry. Aware also of her 'twin's' interest in the mission field, Longson wrote to Lee enquiring whether she would be interested in filling the vacancy left by Ruth Grant.

One striking example of the influence that friends had, is that of Merle Farland and Joy Whitehouse. Born in Christchurch in 1906, Merle Farland moved to Auckland during her childhood, where she struck up a close friendship with Joy Whitehouse. Although Farland had originally worked as a piano teacher, the pair believed that God had called them to train as nurses for 'His service in Foreign Fields'. By mid-1937, both were qualified, and in anticipation of embarking upon their missionary careers, were accepting only relief nursing work. In July, they approached the General Secretary, Arthur Scrivin, about their intentions. Although there were no vacancies on the field at that time, they forwarded a joint letter of application to the Mission Board, written out by Farland and signed by both women. Merle Farland and Joy Whitehouse were accepted for the next available position, which opened in 1938.

However, other women had no specific interest in, or passion for, the overseas field. The Rev. Peter and Mrs Jeanette Barker left for the Solomons in 1963, accompanied by their two young daughters. Applying for the position, and speaking on behalf of himself and his wife, Peter Barker wrote:

...we have no outstanding or spectacular call to Overseas Missions, other than my call to the Ministry within the Church which is 'Mission' wherever it may be.

In some cases, where married women had no previous interest in the Solomons, the application had been initiated by their husbands. Mavis Carter was born into a farming family in 1906. She had attended secondary school for three years, leaving to work in an office. Later, she became engaged to Clarrie Luxton, who was training to be a minister. They married when she was thirty two. She had not known that overseas service had been in his plans, and was somewhat surprised by the proposition. Consequently, she did not describe herself as a missionary, rather 'merely as a wife'.

Stella Pavey, nee Drew, echoed Mavis Luxton's sentiments. Pavey was born in Scotland in 1920. She moved with her family (her parents, a brother and her twin sister) to South Africa where she met and married Gordon Pavey. The couple worked in England and Uganda before emigrating to New Zealand. They were living in Nelson where Gordon managed a hardware store, when they first heard of the urgent need for a business manager on Bougainville. Although Stella was happy to go with her husband, she did not see herself as a 'missionary':

...I wasn't a Missionary in the usual sense of the word. I was simply a housewife and went with my husband, Gordon, when he went to be Business Manager...[on] Bougainville...in 1965.

However, not all wives whose missionary careers were initiated by their husbands, felt the same way. The Rev. Alister and Mrs Alice McDonald (nee McMillan) had been married for five years when he first suggested that they consider ministering in the

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Solomons. Although surprised by the suggestion, mission service was not an alien concept to Alice McDonald. She already had a brother and a sister working on Baptist mission fields in the Sudan and Ethiopia. As well, Joyce McDonald, Alice's sister-in-law, had been appointed to the Solomons as a teacher in 1949. It was not until after Alister had attended a ministers' conference where vacancies in the Solomons had been publicised that he put the proposition to his wife. For Alice, the next course of action was obvious:

...we prayed about it for some months & then felt we should offer to go. We did not regard it as a call to Alister only but to both of us.

Although the women had different motives for going to the Solomons, there are a few who were not sure of why they went. Catherine Brough, nee Clifford, had no real idea of why she went to the Solomons. Her husband had been asked to minister in the Islands, and she was quite willing to go with him. Beyond that, she had no underlying motive. She felt no desire to 'convert the heathen', but neither did she question it.

Catherine Brough's case contrasts to that of Winifred Poole. For Poole, an Australian trained nurse and a New Zealand trained deaconess, it was a well understood desire to serve on the field. Applying in 1941, she was certain of her call, setting it out clearly. Poole's description of her calling emphasised the spiritual rather than the nursing aspects. In the nine points that she lays out as being her call, she mentions nursing only in the sixth: 'An urge to preach the gospel & ability to give consecrated medical aid.'

Not all of the Solomons missionaries had been attracted specifically to the Solomons. In 1919, Lily White first worked in Fiji at the Dudley Orphanage in Dilkusha. She returned to New Zealand in 1921. It was not until 1925 that she reached the Solomons. In the late 1950s Gladys Larkin, a nurse, was originally tossing up between applying to the Bolivian Indian mission and the Solomons mission. While her interest had first been raised by contact with missionaries from the Bolivian Indian mission, she made enquiries to the General Secretary of the New Zealand Methodist mission, who drew her attention to the Solomon Islands field.

Davinia Clark, who was first appointed as a nurse in 1950, did have a particular interest in the Solomon Islands. Her attraction to the Solomons stemmed not only from her connection with the Methodist Church, but her earlier connection with the Seventh Day Adventists, who also had a mission in the Solomons. She had been born into the Seventh Day Adventist Church, but began attending the Methodist Church after her father had a disagreement with the pastor. Davinia made a formal commitment to the Methodist Church in her teenage years. She was twenty two years old when she was accepted for the field and was working at Waikato hospital. The news quickly spread through the nursing staff. Full of admiration, one colleague confessed to her that she herself could never go to the Solomons mission field. Davinia quietly replied: 'I can't not go.'

Reactions

The reactions of friends and family to the news of the pending missionary careers, provides another glimpse into the lives the New Zealand women were leaving, and the determination they had to have to go. At times, the women themselves were unsure of the reaction they would receive. In 1923, Lina Jones informed her family, with some trepidation, of her decision to apply for the position in the Solomon Islands. After she broached the subject with her mother, she discovered overseas mission service was already 'in the family'. One of her great uncles had been a missionary in India.

Effie Harkness recalled the reaction of her parents, themselves ex-missionaries, to the news that she was considering going to the Islands:

...I went home and I said to Mother and Father, 'Well, how do you think of [me] going to the Solomons?'...and they of course gaped. But right from the beginning they were supportive. If I wanted, if I felt that was what was right, I was to do it; if not, well they wouldn't interfere in any way.

While support from church friends was usually forthcoming, women from non-Christian backgrounds commonly found their families to lack understanding. Patricia Hulks and Gladys Larkin were in this position. The reaction which Gladys Larkin got was mixed. Her church friends were thrilled with her decision. However, Larkin's commitment to Christianity was tolerated but not taken seriously by her family. Consequently, when she announced that she wanted to embark upon a missionary career, her relatives could only conclude that: '.. Gladys had gone a bit overboard on "religion".' In fact, her mother thought that she was quite 'mad'.

For Patricia Hulks, it was not merely a lack of understanding on the part of her family. It was complete disagreement. As Hulks recalled: 'My family (not church attenders) [were] absolutely horrified and kept up opposition until I actually left N(ew) Z[ealand].'

Lyn Sadler did not experience the same opposition, but did receive a mixed reaction. Born in 1939, she was part of a family who were nominal Anglicans. She herself became a Methodist in her teens, and while at teachers' college felt a call to 'overseas mission'. While she was completing her Bachelor of Arts, she heard of the need in the Solomons, and prepared herself for mission work by taking jobs in country schools. Her family found it easier to accept the idea that she was going to teach in the Solomons, rather than acknowledge the accompanying 'mission' component.

Coming from a Methodist, or other Christian family, did not guarantee overwhelming delight and enthusiasm. Nancy Carter, nee Scott, recalled how her mother reacted to the news. Daisy Scott, a staunch Methodist, was familiar with the mission and the death of Gladys Chivers, caused by blackwater fever, in 1927. Sure that her daughter was going to become the third martyr of the church in the Islands Daisy tended to blame her daughter's fiancé, George Carter, for putting missionary ideas into her head.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

In 1931, Rewa Williamson was born into a staunch Presbyterian family in Hamilton. Attracted to mission service as a child, and realising that she needed to acquire specific skills, she trained as a nurse. Despite this long held wish to be a missionary, it was the impetuosity of youth which led her to forward her application when she did. There were no vacancies on the Presbyterian mission in Vanuatu. Impatient to wait for an opening, and feeling a call to use her nursing skills in a country which badly needed them, Williamson applied to the Methodist mission. Her Presbyterian parents strongly supported the idea and fact of overseas mission. Although keen on the idea of Williamson becoming a missionary, her mother in particular, had difficulty accepting that she had selected the Methodist field in the Solomons, and not the Presbyterian field in Vanuatu. Mrs Williamson wanted her daughter to serve on the mission field that she was more familiar with.

The negative reaction to the news that the women intended to be missionaries in the Solomon Islands was not uncommon. In 1929, newly appointed Coralie Murray was travelling on board a Burns Philp steamer to the Solomons. During the six week journey, she struck up a good rapport with the other passengers. However, when she came to disembark at Gizo, she was amused by their reaction. Her fellow passengers, unable to comprehend why a lone young woman was 'going to live amongst headhunters', felt sorry for her and threw a party in her honour. Ironically, the minister sent to meet her was Tom Dent, who had been the minister at her Avondale parish some years previously. Despite being perceived by the passengers as braving the unknown, she had 'met up with an old friend straight away'.

Twenty three years later in the post war era, a married couple received a similar reaction. Nelma Woodfield had felt a calling to the field while she was training to be a nurse. She became engaged to Frank Woodfield, who shared her vision of overseas service. While she completed her nursing training, he began his first term in the Solomons. However, friends who had fought in the Solomons during World War II informed her that 'it was not a fit place for a white woman to live.' In spite of that reaction, the couple married in 1951, and Nelma Woodfield joined her husband in the Islands.

In 1968, an appeal for workers in the Solomons read out during a church service had attracted the attention of Don and Frances Pentelow. After applying, they received the same reaction from ex-servicemen who had been in the Solomons during World War II that the Woodfields had. The couple also received another reaction that was commonly experienced by married women. Their families and friends were 'a bit horrified' that the couple intended to take their three year old daughter with them.

People often reacted hesitantly, even negatively, to women announcing their intent to live in the Solomon Islands when those women were mothers. The reaction stemmed from a belief that the child would be deprived of education, health care, and friends. In short, it was taken as obvious that mission children would be deprived of a 'normal' childhood.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

While not receiving any opposition from immediate relatives, Alice McDonald recalled the reaction of a distant cousin:

...we were sternly reprimanded by a cousin of my father. We were his closest relatives geographically & in affinity. His concern was for Graham & Leslie. He...was worried for their safety, health & well-being. My reply to him was that if we were in the place of God's choosing for us we would have much more right to claim His protection for them than if we stayed behind.

Summary

While the women who served in the Solomon Islands between 1922 and 1972 were individuals, there are as many common themes in their stories as there are differences. They had a range of skills, experiences and beliefs to offer the Solomons mission. For some, the decision to leave for the Solomons was not entirely their own. For most, it was a desire that they were intent on, regardless of the reaction of their families or friends. The women, like their callings, were practical rather than ethereal. They had to be if they were to survive on the field.

2: STATUS

'God knew me better than I knew myself. I made a much better missionary as a married woman than I ever would have as a single one.'

Nancy Carter, 1991

The official status of the women in the Methodist mission was determined by their marital status. This distinction divided them into two groups: sixty four single women (or sisters) and forty seven wives. The sisters, like the men, were appointed to the permanent staff and were given specific and official jobs. The wives were not formally appointed in any way. As married women they were not considered to be missionaries; they were wives of missionaries. The difference in the status between the sisters and the wives makes it useful to compare them in several respects: the selection process, their rates of pay, and their political representation.

The selection process

The division of the women according to marital status was evident at the beginning of their missionary careers with the selection process. The suitability of the single women was dependent upon their personal and Christian character, their professional qualifications, and their health. These criteria were judged by an involved selection process. By contrast, up until the 1960s, the suitability of the wives was judged on the possession of two certificates; marriage and medical.

The sisters

The sisters were employed to work on an isolated mission field for a minimum term of three years. After the completion of each term, they were eligible for six months furlough, during which they had a formal obligation to carry out deputation, or publicity work. When the New Zealand Board assumed control of the mission in 1922 there were no effective means of reviewing inappropriate appointments once they had been made. It was not until they had been made. It was not until the 1950s that new staff were put on a two year period of probation. Consequently, the screening process was vital in determining the suitability of the applicant.

Screening was done in two parts; one was written and the other was oral. The written component involved the application form, testimonials and short essays. While the application form changed in format over the years, it consistently surveyed such matters as professional qualifications; personal details of age, hobbies, and possible marital commitments; Christian experience and involvement in church life; and the nature of the call.

Applicants were also required to present three testimonials one of which had to be completed by a minister. The testimonials took the form of a standard questionnaire compiled by the Board. They were prefixed with an explanation of the purpose of the appointment and the need for honesty. Sometimes after receiving the completed

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

forms, the General Secretary contacted the referees for clarification and more detail. In a few cases, discreet and informal queries were sent to prominent Methodists in the candidate's parish.



Assorted twins, Beryl and Audrey Grice, Able and Bensley Jika, Graeme and Neil Cornwall

In the post-World War II period, the screening process was fuller. The attitude of the candidate was further examined with the requirement of written essays. The first was a 'frank and brief [life] story' which included an account of the candidates' practical experience, their conversion and Christian development, and their missionary call. They were also asked to present a written message to the Solomon Islanders.

The oral part involved two interviews; one with the General Secretary and a second with a three member committee from the Methodist Women's Missionary Union. Appointments without either interview taking place were rare.

Throughout the period the Board appointed eleven deaconesses, twenty two teachers, twenty eight nurses, three office workers and one pharmacist. The policy that the women be Christians and able to work both with and independently of others never changed. However the requirements for specialist qualifications became more stringent. Initially all the women appointed to the overseas field were deaconesses, church workers trained to work in areas of Christian social service. The appointment of nurses, with a minimum of one nursing certificate, and trained primary teachers began in the early 1920s. By the end of that decade, the trend had become normal practice. While deaconesses were still appointed as late as 1950, they were required to have some nursing or teaching qualifications. By the 1950s nurses were required to possess a minimum of general nursing and maternity certificates. As well, specialisation was required for two teaching positions. In 1956, the Board advertised for a home craft teacher, who was also qualified to teach art and physical education. In

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

the 1960s the prerequisites for a teaching position at Goldie College were primary teaching qualifications and a university degree.

The final prerequisite was a medical certificate. When Elizabeth Common presented her application in 1921, the Board was impressed by her deaconess and nursing qualifications as well as her disposition, but her medical certificate was in doubt. Faced with an urgent need for workers the Board was lenient and sought second and third opinions on her fitness for work in the tropics. Common's appointment was a successful one. She worked on the field for nineteen years, her service terminated only by her sudden death in New Zealand in 1946. After several instances of new workers prematurely resigning from the mission and long term workers suffering health problems, the Board adopted a stricter policy. By the post war era, medical examinations were mandatory prior to leaving for the field, upon return to New Zealand on furlough, and before departing for the Solomons again.

Despite the screening, mistakes in appointments were made. The urgent need to appoint a worker, brief and hurried interviews, and misjudgements of character all contributed to the wrong person being chosen. Ada Saunders was appointed to Munda in 1923, and soon became infamous for her extremism. Considering the spiritual lives of her European colleagues wanting, she openly condemned them. Mary Bowron, the president of the Methodist Women's Missionary Union, discussed a letter she had received from Saunders with the General Secretary. She commented on the mistake of Ada Saunders's appointment, seeing her as a 'scourge instead of a helper.'

When I reply I can exhort her to be loyal to her fellow workers...[and] urge her to be charitable in her judgement but I fear it will be of no use... She is one of those extreme highly emotional people who make a great to do over their religion - She claims to have received the Holy Ghost after (literally) days of prayer.. [and] is always ejaculating 'Hallelujah Praise the Lord' etc. But the worst of it is that she thinks no one right who is not doing the same.

Forty years after Ada Saunders left the field, the historian Alan Tippett found that she was well remembered for her close association with the young Silas Eto. Originally a Methodist pastor, Eto came to prominence in 1959 as a breakaway messianic prophet. Saunders influenced him to the extent that the pair often prayed together in the bush, but the effect of that upon his later actions is only speculation.

A happier choice was Coralie Murray, a nurse. After interviewing her in 1928, Mary Bowron reported with considerable relief that not only was she a 'dyed-in-the-wool Methodist', but she had 'no fancy ideas in religion - Thank God!'

The wives

The Mission Board believed that because the husbands and the sisters were the employed missionaries it was only they who needed to be interviewed. But the wives, while not employed, were expected to and did work on the field.

Married women, therefore, were sent to the Solomon Islands with little discretion. Problems arose when husbands were appointed with wives who did not want to be there. This unwillingness would evidence itself in the ill health of the wife and the early withdrawal from the field of the missionary couple. Such cases also meant that there was one worker who was less than effective, and could, if not checked, be quite harmful.

The intent of the screening begun in the 1960s was to prevent unsuitable wives being sent to the Solomons. It was not a measure to ensure that the wives were fully qualified professionals. The wives' qualifications had little bearing on the appointment of married couples, even though husbands were required to state those qualifications on their application forms. Officially, the role of a married woman on the mission field was primarily to be a wife. Thus, when David Buchan applied for the position of plantation manager in 1964, he cited the qualifications of his non-professional spouse, Betty Buchan, as: 'The best wife in the world.' Their application, and their careers, were successful.

The effect of the screening is not as clear as the intent of it. There appear to be no cases where the husband was refused because of the wife. This may just mean that the records of the selection committee were not kept, which often happened. In one case however, a candidate for a lay missionary position was accepted because of his wife. The Mission Board doubted the ability of the husband to work effectively as a missionary until his wife was interviewed. She was considered to be the stronger of the two. Despite this, she never received any official recognition. She was seen as being the difference between her husband's success or failure. She was not recognised in her own terms.

The practice of interviewing both the husbands and the wives, which George Carter introduced after he became General Secretary in 1965, was long overdue. However, it is ironic that after decades of ignoring the married women, the appointments committee felt it wise to note the following of one wife:

...at no point [during the interview] did she take the initiative in answering of questions unless one was addressed specifically to her. While she spoke freely in the discussions she left the initiative to her husband.

Despite no requirement for any sort of qualifications at least fifty percent of the wives were professionally qualified. As there was no screening process, there are few official records and the details of only thirty five wives remain. Twenty five of the thirty five wives were qualified before marriage, either as church workers, teachers or nurses. As well, Maureen Moor, who was stationed at Munda between 1968 and 1971, was an occupational therapist. It is more than chance that for a position with no selection screening, at least fifty percent were professionally trained. One reason for this is that several of the wives actively pursued a missionary career. Intent on working in the mission field, they had trained in a suitable profession.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Irene Cornwell trained in the nursing field in the late 1940s with the express purpose of working in the home mission as a deaconess. To further prepare herself for her intended career, she learnt Maori from a local elder while still in the sixth form. It was an era when Maori was not taught at schools. The switch from home mission to overseas mission occurred when she met her husband. Together, they decided to offer as a missionary couple for the Solomon Islands. While Gordon Cornwell, her fiancé, completed his theological training, Irene furthered her own. This was a determined decision on her part to become as qualified in the area of infant and maternal health as she could. It was a decision that she stood by in face of considerable pressure from the Mission Board to postpone her marriage and leave for the Solomon Islands immediately. They were short of nurses and knew she was intending to go out as a married woman. She felt that it was important that she become as qualified as she could and that she and her husband should start their missionary careers together.

Nancy Carter's interest in serving on an overseas mission field predated her marriage. While training as a primary school teacher, she became interested in working as a mission sister in China. With the Communist accession to power, all possibility of serving there faded. This, and her engagement to a man eager to serve on the Solomon Islands mission field saw the labels on her bags changed, as well as her status. Of this change, Nancy Carter said quite emphatically: 'God knew me better than I knew myself. I made a much better missionary as a married woman than I ever would have as a single one.'

There was also the incidence, though small, of single women missionaries marrying on the field. Constance Bensley, nee Olds, was the first New Zealand-trained deaconess to be appointed to the Solomons, and the first New Zealand woman to marry on the field. Stationed at Munda in 1919 she worked as a sister until her marriage to a fellow missionary, the Rev. Arthur Bensley (who was the first New Zealand minister to be appointed). The couple remained in the Solomons until 1934. The missionary careers of four other women followed the same pattern. All of the four - Joyce Sides, nee McDonald, Audrey Bruce, nee Highnam, Audrey Fleury, nee Roberts and Davinia Taylor, nee Clark - were post-war workers. Joyce Sides was a teacher while the other three were nurses. Although they remained on the field, each of the five women had to resign from the mission. They went from being paid mission sisters to unpaid wives.

The stipends

The sisters

Missionaries were not attracted to the field for financial reasons, nor could the Mission Board afford to offer a substantial remuneration. In 1922, sisters serving their first term were paid £115 per annum; a continuation of the rate set by the Australian Board. The sisters' basic stipends were not adjusted until 1933, eleven years after the New Zealand Board assumed control of the mission. That 'adjustment' was a ten per

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

cent decrease due to the Depression. When the rate rose again in the late 1930s, it returned to the original £115. In the post-war era the rates were adjusted more frequently.

The stipend paid to all employees was ostensibly to cover living costs. However, there are discrepancies in the basic stipends of different workers that cannot be fully explained by different living expenses. Unconnected to the need to cover expenses, is the increase of the basic stipend for each additional term, although a ceiling figure was set. For the sisters in 1922, the limit was £150 per annum. The sliding scale provided a slight incentive for the missionary to remain on the field and rewarded women and men in long term service.

The basic stipends also varied between the professions and were graded according to status. In 1922, a single minister in his first term received £220 per annum, while a single lay missionary received £160 per annum. In the same period, a single woman in her first term, whether a trained nurse, teacher or deaconess, was paid £115 per annum. Between 1922 and 1972, single women were consistently paid at a lesser rate than the single men. However, this is not surprising. The Board was employing women in low paying professions at a time when pay inequity was the norm. Further it is reasonable to assume that inequity in pay conditioned the choice to employ female teachers and nurses.

Specific variations in living expenses were provided for by sundry allowances, not the basic stipend. This strengthens the correlation between the basic stipend and the missionary's status. The sundry allowances became more intricate over the years. Initially, single women had received a linen grant. By the 1950s, extra allowances included an 'initial outfit grant' to assist new missionaries establishing themselves on the field, and made additional provision for the costs of refrigerators and electricity as well as the expenses faced by sisters living on their own.

While the rate of the basic stipend covered general costs, it also reflected the status of missionaries and the value placed on their work. The tendency to undervalue the work of women missionaries can be seen most clearly in the discrepancy between the pay rates of the employed missionaries and the remuneration of the wives.

The Wives

While the official missionaries were paid the wives were not. Their husbands received a stipend from the Mission Board which allowed the 'missionary' to provide for his family; and it was adequate provision, taking into account the husband's status and the number of children the couple had. It did not however take into account the amount of work which the wife performed.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Thus the wife of a carpenter, while doing the same work as the wife of the doctor, would be supported on a smaller income because of the value placed on her husband's job. In 1922, a married lay missionary received £30 more than his unmarried counterpart, while a married minister received £40 more than his unmarried counterpart. Therefore, a lay missionary's was worth £30 and a minister's wife was worth £40.



Mrs Alley and Mrs Leadley with baby Gina.

After World War II, the Solomon Islands Government began to subsidise the mission for the work of their qualified staff in the areas of health and education. This included Irene Cornwell's nursing and the teaching work of Nancy Carter. The government allowance that the mission received for the work of these two wives was never passed on to either woman in any way. The Board did not recognise the wives by paying them.

This attitude is also reflected in the way missionaries were acknowledged outside the mission. Honours were awarded to selected men and at least four sisters. Merle Farland, Lucy Money and Myra Fraser were awarded MBEs and Ada Lee was granted a QSM. The work of Beryl Voyce between the years 1926 and 1958 was not recognised in a similar manner.

The Church Courts

The Mission Board divided the New Zealand women into two groups according to marital status. However, further divisions exist within both groups; divisions that are reflected in their respective positions in the Church courts.

The sisters

(a) Status

The history of the sisters' position in the courts of the church is a complex and obscure story. Volumes of correspondence, constant conferring with legal advisers, and treatment by the Solomon Islands Synod and the Mission Board meetings all contribute to the wealth of remaining material. However, it is not the legal care taken by the New Zealand Church that attracts attention, but the persisting problem that underlay the fifty years of discussion: the exact definition of 'sister'. The fact that the matter has never been satisfactorily resolved gives pause for consideration.

Single women serving the church on the overseas mission field were considered to have a special church status. The problem was that nobody agreed on exactly what it should be. The confusion lay in the subtle division of the overseas sisters into two groups: those who were dedicated deaconesses and those who were not. Dedicated deaconesses already possessed an official status from the New Zealand Deaconess Order; an order of single women who served on the home field. There were no mechanisms for giving comparative status to the overseas sisters. The constant need to have the sisters' status clearly defined, especially in relation to the home church and the Deaconess Order proved problematic. The home church was entirely unsuitable as a comparison.

From 1922, sisters accepted to the Solomons who were not deaconesses were required to undertake one year of study at Deaconess House; the standard course was two years. Qualified nurses and teachers were thought to benefit from some theological and pastoral training. After the one year, they were dedicated to the Deaconess Order before they proceeded to the overseas field. However, completion of the deaconess training was entirely dependent on the urgency of the need on the field. Many women did not attend Deaconess House because their presence on the understaffed field was required immediately. Consequently, only twelve women attended the training course; the majority of the overseas sisters never did.

Beginning with Lilian Berry (a deaconess and nurse) and May Barnett (a deaconess) in 1922, the single women were dedicated to the overseas work before departure for the Solomons. While not always successful, there was a considerable effort put into timing this dedication service with the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Methodist Church. Ministers and deaconesses were ordained and dedicated at Conference.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

A problem arose in 1933 with the appointment of Vera Cannon. She was a fully qualified nurse but had no deaconess training. At a time when the Board was retrenching workers, Cannon had offered to serve for one year without pay. She had been accepted and was 'earmarked' for the Bougainville region, to work with Beryl Voyce. Harry and Beryl Voyce had pioneered the Bougainville region in 1926 and Beryl herself worked without pay. The General Secretary then arranged for Cannon to be dedicated to the overseas field at the Annual Conference of 1933. However, the Deaconess Committee strongly objected to her dedication being held at Conference, viewing it as a dedication into the Deaconess Order. Arthur Scrivin, the General Secretary, was somewhat bemused by the objection. From the Mission Board's point of view, Vera Cannon was being dedicated as an overseas mission sister. It was a natural assumption that as a worker serving the church, she was entitled to be dedicated to that work.

As late as 1937, Scrivin was still unsure of the relationship between the single women working on the overseas field, and the single women working on the home field. The names of both groups of women were listed together under the heading of 'Deaconesses' in the Minutes of Conference, a practice which continued until 1952. Further, the Book of Laws governing the New Zealand Methodist Church, made provision for overseas sisters who had served for more than one term, to enter the Deaconess Order. Yet in essence, the two groups performed work of a different nature.

By 1950, the conflict of interest between the Mission Board and the Deaconess Committee was still very evident. In that year, the dedication of Jane Bond, a nurse undergoing deaconess training, was disputed. Bond had entered Deaconess House with the intention of serving on the home field. However, at the end of her first year she felt a calling to the Solomons. Notifying the Deaconess Board of what she was doing, she applied and was later accepted for a nursing position on the overseas mission. Informing the Deaconess Board of her acceptance Bond completed the required course in midwifery. By 1950, she had fulfilled the one year of deaconess training and completed an extra year of nursing training required for overseas mission sisters. Therefore, she was eligible to be dedicated as a deaconess.

However, the Deaconess Board were unwilling to dedicate her. They took her notification of acceptance into the overseas mission as a resignation from the Order, as opposed to a resignation from home mission work. There was a difference, as both Scrivin and Bond were distressed to discover. Corresponding with the Deaconess House Committee, Scrivin cited the precedents of Lucy Money and Winifred Poole. These two women had proceeded to the Solomons in 1946 and 1947 respectively. They differed from Jane Bond only in that they had entered Deaconess House with the intent of working on the overseas field. After completing one year at the House and possessing nursing qualifications and teaching experience, they were dedicated into

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

the Deaconess Order, and left for the Solomons. The Rev. Stan Andrews wrote the following in support of Jane Bond:

It is unthinkable that we should attempt to dictate to the Almighty as to when and how He should call His workers. God called these three workers [Lucy Money, Winifred Poole and Jane Bond] at His own appointed time and they each received the same training for the same work.

The Rev. V.R. Jamieson, the chairman of the Deaconess Board, was also sympathetic to Bond's position and clarified the issue. The problem lay in the prefix to the term 'sister.' 'Mission' sister equated with 'deaconess', while 'nursing' and 'teaching' sister did not:

When Miss Bond notified the Board of her acceptance for Overseas service she stated that she had offered to go as a 'Nurse'. There is a distinction between a 'Nursing Sister' and a 'Missionary Sister' or 'Deaconess'. I know Miss Bond was unaware of the difference nor was I aware of it.... technically the [Deaconess] Board is correct but Miss Bond did not intend to resign from Deaconess House and the Deaconess Order.

The controversy was taken up by Jane Bond's colleagues; she herself was loathe to speak of the matter. In fact, the situation had been brought to the notice of the Mission Board by other indignant deaconesses, who circulated a petition asking for Bond's dedication to proceed. Jane Bond was not accepted into the Deaconess Order until 1952, two years after she began her service in the Solomons.

Two years after the Bond affair erupted, the status given to the missionaries was still undetermined. In 1952, a newly appointed teaching sister, Pamela Beaumont, sent a query to Scrivin from the field. She explained that as she was neither a deaconess nor a local preacher she was unsure of her correct definition. He replied:

Dear Sister Pamela

"...church member" would, I expect, have been sufficient description of your church status.

The paradox is clear. Scrivin defined Beaumont (who was working as a missionary) as a 'church member'; no different from any other member. Simultaneously he addressed her as 'Sister'; a term for a dedicated worker of the church. But, even the use of the term 'sister' was questioned. In 1963 Scrivin's successor, Stan Andrews, wrote:

.../ should personally be glad to see the term "sister" restricted to deaconesses.

The policy of training single women at Deaconess House was reviewed in 1953. However, the impetus for change did not come from a desire to clarify the status of overseas missionaries; the initial incentive came from outside influences. The 1953 decision to extend the New Zealand mission, in partnership with Australia, into the

New Guinea Highlands was the catalyst for change. The Australian Board trained their overseas missionaries at institutions specialising in overseas mission. Because New Zealanders and Australians worked together in the Highlands, it was decided that workers on that mission should have the same training. It was then a simple matter of extending the ruling to all the workers the New Zealand Board employed. Overseas missionary training superseded the deaconess training.

As with the deaconess training before it, sisters were still prevented from undertaking missionary training because of the urgent need on the field. However, the change from deaconess to missionary training was a positive step towards giving the overseas missionaries a status in their own right. The difference between deaconesses and overseas workers had become more distinct. By 1966, the term 'lay missionaries' was defined in relation to the overseas work: 'people serving our church on the mission field who are not ordained ministers or members of the Deaconess Order.'

Despite this, it was not until 1969 that the single women were totally separated from the Deaconess Order. From 1922, the sisters' retiring allowances were paid into the Deaconess Retiring Fund regardless of whether or not they were deaconesses. In 1969, the payments were transferred into the Lay Missionaries Fund.

Two works on Deaconess House illustrate that the definition of 'sister' was an ongoing problem. In the mid-1950s, Rita Snowden compiled a commemorative booklet for the jubilee of the Deaconess Order. The index of deaconesses included the overseas sisters regardless of whether or not they were trained deaconesses. It is worth noting that Snowden's name also appears on the petition that was lodged with the Deaconess Board at the height of the dispute over Jane Bond. In Wesley Chambers' 1987 historical index of deaconesses, only those who had trained at Deaconess House were included. This uncertainty which enveloped the position of the sisters, is demonstrated by their political influence in the Solomon Islands Synod.

(b) Political influence

The Solomon Islands Synod consisted of two sessions; a representative synod and a ministerial synod, and until 1951, these were largely dominated by the Rev. J.F. Goldie, one of the founders of the mission. From 1922, all clergy were required to be present at both sessions, and although the sisters were eligible to attend the representative session, the 1922 Synod resolved that:

...until such time as a special Constitution is drawn up, the law applying to the Deaconesses having a seat in Synod [in New Zealand] do not apply to Missionary Sisters in the Solomon Islands.

It was not until 1927 that the sisters were granted the right to elect a representative. In that year the Solomons Synod passed the resolution that:

...the Missionary Sisters be empowered to elect one of their number, who has been at least four years on the Mission Field, who shall be a member of the Representative Session of the Mission Synod.

However, the provision of one sister on the representative meeting did not ensure that the women had adequate representation; the nine sisters were represented by one of their number while all ten ministers were members of the representative session.

Attendance at synod was also complicated by the difficulties of transport. All the missionaries were restricted by transport problems, but the men were not dependent on Goldie in the same way that the sisters were. Because it was the men who travelled most frequently, they controlled the use of the boats, and Goldie in particular did not like having women on board. He felt the lack of toilet facilities was burdensome. Goldie was also prone to favouritism. His decision on whether he would take a sister to synod was determined by his personal opinion of the sister in question. Thus Lina Jones, whom he held in high regard, was one of the few women to attend synods in the pre-war period.

Consequently, the influence of the sisters was restricted to their professional relationships with male colleagues. This channel of influence related directly to the amount of time the sister had served and her subsequent reputation. In 1922, Lilian Berry was censured by the General Secretary for disagreeing with Goldie over how the hospital should be run. By the end of her twelve years of service she was held in high esteem by the Solomon Islanders and the Board. Influence through this channel was also dependent on the discretion of male missionaries as opposed to the sister's competence.

Another means of influence that was open to every single woman was correspondence with the General Secretary, and successive General Secretaries emphasised the importance of such contact. Their primary motive was to reduce the feeling of isolation from New Zealand. Stan Andrews wrote one descriptive letter about a holiday he and his family had in Birkenhead. He was not engaging in small talk. It was the home parish of the sister whom he was corresponding with. While the Board was informed of problems on the field, and the sisters were provided with a confidant, the political effect was slight. The 1941 dispute between Doctor Alan Rutter, and Nurses Merle Farland and Joy Whitehouse is a case in point.

The doctor was the head of the medical mission. This was recognised as a matter of course by the nurses. However, the extraordinary authority granted to the doctor distorted standard hospital hierarchy. He was accountable to no one. Naturally this posed some problems.

Joy Whitehouse, Merle Farland and Alan Rutter were all stationed at Bilua on Vella Lavella. As a result of a dispute with Alan Rutter over restationing in 1941 both women tendered their resignations. The restationing proposals were made by the

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

doctor while on furlough in New Zealand. Therefore the two women could not exert the professional influence they may have, had the proposals been made on the field. As Whitehouse wrote:

If [the doctor] had been thinking of the work he should have discussed it here on the field & perhaps the changes could have been made to a certain extent.

The matter went to the 1941 Synod, at which there was no sisters' representative present. The synod upheld and reinforced the position of the doctor. Although Farland and Whitehouse believed that the matter was serious the General Secretary, Arthur Scrivin, saw it as a minor dispute blown out of proportion. He insisted that 'resignation was not the way out'.

The issue is not whether Merle Farland and Joy Whitehouse were right, but that the two women considered they had a serious grievance and had no effective means of addressing it. Ineligible to be present to state their case at Synod, they took the matter up with the General Secretary. When this course of action failed, they registered their protests with their resignations. While an effective political voice would not have avoided the dispute, it would have prevented its escalation. The resignations were tendered because Farland and Whitehouse considered their professional integrity to have been slighted without possibility of redress. Therefore the sisters were at a political disadvantage to the men.

The 1941 dispute is significant in the bearing it had on Farland's actions during World War II, in particular, her defiant refusal to be evacuated on the *Fauro Chief* in January 1942. It is intriguing that Farland rebutted all attempts to persuade her to withdraw her 1941 resignation, but simultaneously refused to be evacuated in the face of the Japanese advance. She was adamant that she would remain at her post. In a letter written from behind Japanese lines, five months after her initial refusal to leave the Solomons, Farland reiterated her refusal to reconsider her resignation. (Whitehouse who was on furlough in New Zealand had retracted hers.)

Merle Farland's personal view of the evacuation was influenced by the earlier dispute over the hospital. Farland's war journal is a sustained attack on the men who instigated the January evacuation in the *Fauro Chief*. Farland's systematic rejection of the need for the voyage concentrated mainly on the male missionaries involved. It is significant that the two men in question had both been present at the 1941 Synod which upheld Doctor Rutter. Farland was certain that the voyage had not been undertaken for the safety of the women as claimed. She accused the doctor of adventure-seeking that was likely to result in the death of all on board. She completely exonerated the women stating a belief that they had been 'bullied' into evacuating:

I believe Lina [Jones] was against it & am sure Effie [Harkness] could not have gone willingly. Grace [McDonald] was too sick to be able to insist on staying. The others [the men] apparently lost their heads.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

The journal is more than her personal view of the evacuation. Her continual depiction of women in a passive role and her emphasis on the actions of the men demonstrate her frustration with the lack of political control accorded to the sisters.

However, her defiance of the radio wire: 'Board desires all women return' should not be interpreted as a political statement. Farland, like every other missionary, was sincere in her wish to remain and continue with the work. She was able to do so only by virtue of being stationed on the isolated island of Choiseul. The Choiseul station had a European population of two. Munda, where the missionaries initially left from, had more contact with the outside world than any other Methodist station. Munda's sizeable European population were enveloped in rumours, that were false, that the Japanese had bombed Faisi. That Farland was in a better place to carry out her desire to stay is supported in that two ministers also remained in the BSIP, neither of whom were stationed at Munda. Wattie Silvester, John Rudd Metcaife and Merle Farland were all working in isolated areas, detached from the more hysterical rumours. After nine months behind Japanese lines, Farland was evacuated by US Forces. They had noticed her presence only after she had assisted in the rescue of downed US Air Force pilots.



Dr and Mrs Sayers on their wedding day.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

As late as 1952, thirty years after the New Zealand Board had assumed responsibility for the field, the sisters who by then numbered seventeen, were still granted only one representative. The matter was successfully addressed at the 1953 Synod, two years after the retirement of the Rev. J.F. Goldie. In 1953, the number of sisters' seats on the representative session was raised to four. At that same synod, the question of the Solomon Islanders representation was addressed with a view to action.

Despite this, discrepancies still existed. The most obvious discrepancy was a continuation from the 1927 ruling requiring the elected sister to have served for at least one term on the Solomons field. This stipulation did not apply to the clergy. One minister, a veteran of ten days in the Islands, was summoned from his station to attend a synod. Women who had served on the Solomons mission for two and a half years were not entitled to be there.

In 1954, the regulations were changed again, stipulating the election of no more than one nursing sister and one teaching sister from each territory. (The BSIP and the TPNG.) The decision to ensure representation from the two main professions in both territories limited the choice of candidates. To be able to find one nurse and one teacher in each territory, all four of whom had been in the Islands for more than three years, who were not on furlough, too busy, unable to be relieved, or restricted by transport problems was not always possible. The restriction on eligibility made the ruling that all four had to be elected academic.

In 1957, Synod approached the Board wanting to discuss the matter of 'one sister, one vote'. The General Secretary, Stan Andrews, contacted the legal adviser to Conference:

You will be sorry to learn that the matter of representation of sisters in the Solomon Islands District Synod is once more before our Board, again at the request of the Solomon Islands Synod itself.

In reply, Mr. H. Flesher stated that the question of individual seats had arisen in the mid-1940s. Explaining the precedent, he wrote:

[A sister] is not entitled as of right to be a member of the Representative Session of the Island Synod...

The Law Revision Committee had correspondence with Rev. Scrivin in 1946 or 1947 on the question as to who should be members of [that] Session....

It was pointed out to the Committee that the Minister was responsible for all financial matters in his Circuit and that problems could arise if three or four sisters out-voted him, and consequently, evidently to preserve a balance, the present regulations were passed.

Mr Scrivin stated that the Island Synod approved of these regulations.

Practical reasons supported the restriction of sisters' synod membership to representation. To grant membership to every sister, entire stations would have had to

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

close down over synod. However, reform continued and in 1958 the stipulation regarding equal representation of professions was abandoned. By the early 1960s, the prerequisite of one term of service on the field was also discarded.

Until 1962, the sisters' representation had been restricted to the representative synod. In that year deaconesses were granted a seat at the ministerial session, although it was not until 1964 that a deaconess was free to attend. Sister Lucy Money recorded the historic session:

The [1964] Ministerial Session... made history. For the first time in the 62 years of the District's history, a woman was present as a member of the Ministerial Committee. Two years ago it was agreed that, coming into line with synods in other Districts, Deaconesses should have a seat on the ministerial committee, but this is the first time since then that a Deaconess had been able to attend.

That report also appeared in the New Zealand Methodist Times. However, the 1962 Minutes of Conference do not change the wording that only ministers were eligible to attend the ministerial committee nor did the wording change in subsequent years. It is intriguing that the only other record of Lucy Money's presence at the 1964 ministerial session is that of her name appearing on the list of those present.

The Wives

In comparison with the involved history of the sisters' position in the church courts, the story of the wives is brief. Their status remained clear and unchanged. As wives they were not included at circuit quarterly meetings, nor were they to get any representation at the annual synod.

Nancy Carter believes that although she had no representation on synod, she did have influence through her husband; a situation that she was quite happy with:

... there was no place... in the courts of the church for wives, and indeed the sisters were only there...on sufferance at Synod right up to the war....But I think we wives, even though we didn't have any official say, we wielded a fair amount of power because of...our interaction with our husbands. I know George [Carter] and I discussed most things about what was going on. Inevitably that was carried through to the courts of the church.

This channel of influence places the wives in a stronger position than the sisters during the pre-war era. The influence of the wives was always constant

Influence through the husband though, is a poor substitute for actual representation; especially as the amount of influence through these channels is directly proportional to the status of the husband. There was a traditional hierarchal order amongst the wives that depended upon the job their husbands did. The wife of an engineer or carpenter did not carry as much weight within the mission as the wife of a minister. In the

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Solomons, the wife at the top of the order was the wife of the Chairman of the District, while the doctor's wife had a special status of her own.



Mrs Luxton with children at Buka

Although Nancy Carter was quite happy with her position in the political structure of the mission, she was the wife of the Chairman of the District. Irene Cornwell worked on Buka at Skotolan station for fifteen years as a minister's wife. She was not happy with the representation that she had:

I wasn't even regarded as a member of the church. I had no vote on any.. mission meeting at all because I was a wife. ...It was a totally different look [by the Board] at mission wives [in comparison to the sisters.]

The Rev. Gordon Cornwell unsuccessfully challenged the lack of representation for the wives at Synod. Wives in the New Zealand church were not entitled to a vote as of right, or even representation, and the situation in the Solomons was considered to be no different. However, ministers' wives in New Zealand were regarded as members of the parish in which they worked. Therefore, they were represented as church members. But membership of the Solomon Islands church was defined as:

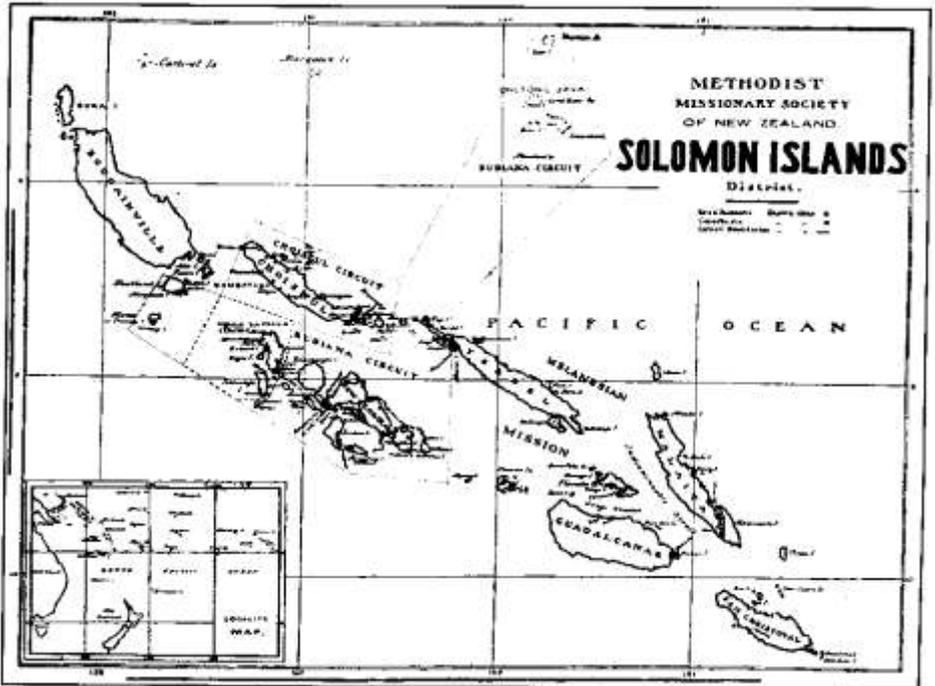
...the Ministers and Probationers stationed in the District and such persons [Solomon Islanders] as shall satisfy the Minister and Leaders' Meeting of their

personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, their lives being in harmony with their profession.

Lay missionaries and sisters were officially included when their names appeared on the mission stationing sheet. Wives' names were rarely listed, and then as the exception rather than the rule. While working on the Solomons field, the New Zealand wives were not part of the Solomons church. The wives were the least recognised of all the workers.

Summary

To say that there was a direct correlation between the official and marital status of the women would be understatement. The two were the same. Equating the official and the marital status resulted in forty two percent of the women missionaries never officially existing. This was reflected in the selection process, the rates of pay, and the political representation of the women. Although the single women were official missionaries, their status was not clearly defined. In addition, they were considered of secondary importance to the men especially in regard to financial and political recognition. If the status of the sisters was not clearly defined, that of the wives was dubious.



3: EXPERIENCES OF MISSION LIFE

'Life on a mission station isn't compartmentalised like it is in New Zealand...'

Beryl Leadley, nee Grice, 1991

Adjusting to life as a missionary was not only a case of adjusting to a different culture. It also involved adapting to life on a mission station. The adjustments that had to be made in the Solomon Islands, the general living conditions on the field, and staff relations begin a foray into station life. Particular to the wives was coping with family life in what was initially an alien society. The physical safety of the women and their experiences during World War II also warrant attention. Throughout their careers the women acted as cultural observers. An examination of all these factors goes some way towards explaining the experiences of the women on the Methodist mission.

Arrival and Adjustments

(a) The journey

In 1922, the only means of travel to the Solomons was the six weeks long Burns Philp 'round trip', which was a tourist route. Leaving from Sydney the steamer travelled up through the Solomon Islands stopping at Gizo on the return to Sydney. On board a ship for many weeks, some new recruits met up with old hands - from both the Methodist and other missions - giving them the opportunity to be forewarned. A few recall the snatched language lessons in cabins, and explanations of what to expect. Lina Jones travelled from Sydney to the Solomons with her colleague Lilian Berry in 1924. However, the woman who made the biggest impression on Jones was another passenger, Kathleen Deck of the South Sea Evangelical Mission.

The three women struck up a friendship, with Deck joining the two Methodists in their cabin for evening prayer. However, Berry was not a good sailor and spent most of her time in her own cabin. During the second leg of the journey Jones spent much of her time with Kathleen Deck. Jones was impressed by the seventeen years Deck had served in the Solomons, and was eager to hear her advice. It was Deck who first introduced Jones to 'native housing', when she took her ashore during one stop, explaining and commenting all the way. Before disembarking at Malaita, she took Jones aside for a few last words of advice 'on the quiet'.

However, the climax of the journey was to arrive in the western Solomons. Ada Lee described the excitement she felt, and the scene she observed when she first arrived at Rendova on New Georgia in 1934:

Great was the excitement when, midst the heat of a tropical sun, we dropped anchor in the calm waters of the bay at Rendova. In the deep blueness of the water, the green reflections of coconut palms growing at the water's edge, made a splash of colour against the white of the steamer & schooners anchored in various places in the bay. This was my dismounting

place & anxiously I scanned the schooners to find the "Tandanya", which was to take me on to Rendova. Breathlessly I watched boats approaching from the schooners, but each time I was disappointed, until at last from the furthest off a white boat was lowered, a man in white [Reverend J.F.Goldie] stepped in, four boys, with the blackest of skins & the whitest of tivos kept in place by a red sash took the oars, & with long steady strokes rowed towards the steamer.

The trips were not always enjoyable, the discomfort at times overpowered the sense of 'adventure'. In 1949, Irene and Gordon Cornwell left New Zealand with high expectations. Arriving in Sydney by ship, they discovered an administrative error whereby their appointment had been delayed. Spending six unpaid weeks in Sydney they were in a state of limbo not knowing when, or even whether, they were to proceed to Bougainville. Eventually, they were flown to Rabaul, travelling on to Buka by ship.

The arrival of two women on Bougainville, forty years apart, bears comparison. Beryl Voyce journeyed by boat to Bougainville in 1926. While attempting to land, the boat carrying the cargo capsized scattering burst suitcases and her clothing along the beach. Forty years later, in 1967, Gwenyth Taylor arrived at Tonu with her husband and two daughters. Their possessions, which had arrived before them, had been damaged in transit. She recalled:

On arrival [we] found all our possessions spread out, ruined by storm water damage in the ship. We'd had word of this & had been able to replace some things in Sydney...The sisters had done their best & [had] washed [the] clothing....What an introduction to missionary service! From that point worldly possessions assumed their rightful place...

(b) Acclimatisation

Whether travelling by ship or plane acclimatising to the heat was a hurdle. On the sea voyage, adjustment was relatively gradual. Arriving by plane, however, the transition was more dramatic, leaving the new-comer wondering just how she was going to breathe for the next three years. Consequently new workers were encouraged to rest during the heat of the day. Even for the 'old hands' from the time that the sun was above the coconut trees in the morning, until the time it went down, they lived in clothes that were constantly wet with perspiration.

The style and nature of clothing worn was determined by the heat. Through necessity all clothes, including underwear, had to be cotton. While there were no written rules about the style of clothing, there was a tradition of modesty established by the first missionaries. Both the sisters and the wives wore loose fitting dresses, it being uncommon to wear shorts or long pants. Nurses wore the only official uniform and

even then some adjustments were made. Working in the heat at Munda in the 1960s Gladys Larkin found it practical to cut the sleeves out of her uniform.

(c) Language acquisition

After initial impressions, the women were faced with the task of learning a new language. Due to the diversity of languages in the Solomon Islands, the language each woman learnt depended upon the area she was stationed at. Roviana was the original lingua franca of the mission, but each of the six circuits subsequently adopted its own. Thus Roviana was spoken at Munda, Bilua was spoken at Bilua on Vella Lavella, Babatana at Sasamuqa on Choiseul, Siwai in the south of Bougainville, and Teop in the north, while Petats was used at Skotolan on Buka Island. There was also Pijin, a language which differed between localities. While the Solomons Pijin was a mixture of English and the Island language spoken in Island form, the Bougainville Pijin, on account of the link with New Guinea, was a mixture of English, the Island languages and German.

While Amy and Clary Leadley had been given Roviana lessons before leaving New Zealand in the 1930s, most missionaries acquired their first smatterings from the Solomon Islanders. In 1938, a few months after her arrival at Munda, Effie Harkness described the sympathetic response of the Solomon Islanders to her attempts at Roviana:

However funny our mistakes in the language must strike them the adults are most considerate to our feelings and don't laugh. One day some time ago I gaily said the Roviana for "Good night" in the middle of the morning to a woman and she gravely said "Good night" back to me.. ..I know I do say the weirdest things at times but it is no good not trying to speak until you can perfectly.

A few months after her first letter describing her attempts, Harkness was able to write home: 'If you say just enough in Roviana for them to get the gist of what you are saying, then end up with a good flow of English they seem quite impressed as a rule.'

Basic study exercises accompanied the practice and assistance given by the Islanders. Because there were few dictionaries for the Solomon Islands languages, compiling and memorising individual vocabularies became standard. Nurses first learnt the hospital vocabulary. When Gladys Larkin arrived on Munda in 1960, she was helped by nursing sister Audrey Roberts (later Marama Fleury). Roberts drew up a list of medical questions and possible answers. Theological vocabularies were built when individuals were faced with the prospect of taking lotu, the daily church service.

When the missionaries became fluent the language they acquired was at times preferable to English. Speaking and corresponding amongst themselves, they would incorporate snatches of their second language. Grace McDonald at times began letters to other sisters in the Roviana language, while Lina Jones made the occasional entry of Roviana in her diary. Effie Harkness commented that when talking amongst

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

themselves, the sisters often preferred to use Roviana words as they were 'more expressive'.

However, re-stationing and transference of staff, meant that the women after acquiring one language, had to learn another. While Grace McDonald, a gifted linguist, is said to have learnt four languages within a relatively short time, most found it difficult. In the mid-1920s, May Barnett was transferred from Bilua on Vella Lavella, to Munda on New Georgia. She discovered that moving locality entailed more than a change of scenery:

...I have been moved from Bilua to the Head Station at Kokengolo [Munda]. It is like beginning all over again here, the language is different and the people strangers. Two of the girls here know the Bilua language, so I go to them when I want to make myself understood.

It was more than just a matter of not being understood however. As well as already having mastered the Bilua language, May Barnett had acquired many skills in the year she had been on Vella Lavella. Use of these skills were restricted by the renewed language difficulties.

From the late 1950s onwards the opportunity for the teaching sisters to learn the local language was lessened. Beulah Reeves arrived at Kihili in 1957 to take up a teaching position at the Girls' High School. Because of the concern at that time over English acquisition by the students Reeves was instructed by Harry Voyce to speak in English only. The attitude was taken that if she could not speak the Island language, then the students would have to speak English. A related factor influencing Voyce's decision was the diversity of languages amongst the students. As a result of both concerns, English became the lingua franca of the mission.

One exception to this trend was Lyn Sadler who joined the mission determined to learn a second language. She arrived on Banga Island, near Munda, in 1964 to teach English to classes of multiple language groups. Ignoring the sceptics, she successfully taught herself Roviana with the help of her Roviana speaking students.

General conditions

(a) The station

Each woman's experiences of mission life depended largely upon the station she lived on. The stations in the six circuits were established at different times. Munda had been pioneered in 1902 and by 1905 Sasamuqa and Bilua were in existence. With the assumption of control by New Zealand in 1922 the official expansion into Bougainville began on Buka Island. In 1927 Harry and Beryl Voyce were sent to pioneer Siwai, twenty five years after the mission began.

The stations also varied in isolation, both from the local villages and from the outside world. Munda on New Georgia was the most exposed to outside contact and foreign

influence. The mission station there was set apart from the local villages and had the highest number of expatriate staff. In the late 1950s Beryl Grice spent her first two years at Munda. In the early 1960s she was transferred to Sasamuqa:

At Munda you weren't in the heart of a village, like you were at Sasamuqa. The big village [at Sasamuqa] was all. ...around you. So, the local people are knocking on the door all the time with a centipede bite or a fish hook in their hand, or a woman in labour, or bringing you something because it's a child's birthday. And the village encroached right on the Sisters' house all the time, day and night....If you weren't teaching or marking...you were...out on the reef with some of the children looking in the rock pools, or you were up in the gardens with the girls or you...were teaching somebody some songs....Everyday was just involved with the same great big family that you were part of...

The nature of the landscape also differed widely affecting matters as diverse as transport and the ability to grow food. In 1953 when Alister and Alice McDonald were preparing to leave New Zealand for Choiseul, they were given a list of 'suitable items'. Included were a pair of tramping boots, which were very 'suitable' for the overland distances that had to be covered on Bougainville. However, they were superfluous on Choiseul where the main mode of transport was canoe.

(b)The food supply

The nature of the food supply also differed between stations. As the soil on Vella Lavella was conducive to gardening, Bilua was supplied with freshly grown produce, as well as imported food. However, the ground at Munda was largely coral, so the station relied heavily on imported goods. Foodstuffs and other goods were ordered from Sydney and, in the latter years, from Rabaul. Ordering required foresight, precision and luck. Effie Harkness recorded the Christmas order of sweets she made for the children. Ordering 'a quarter of a dozen' five pound tins of sweets, she was sent four dozen five pound tins. Isolation and the irregularity of boats caused further problems. In the 1930s Beryl Voyce's food supply was reduced to nothing, with visitors having eaten their way through the reserve. The boat with new supplies was expected 'several weeks ago'. Gloria Shepherd, stationed on Bougainville, recalled one situation where the goods were kept in storage for eleven months because of problems with the customs documentation.

The immediate post-war period provided a different situation. Most gardens had been destroyed during World War II, and the Islanders themselves found it hard to support the mission with food in the way they had previously. Effie Harkness recalled:

...at one stage, we'd gone right out of flour. But the Americans had left lots and lots of foodstuffs, and amongst them was lots of custard powder. And quite a few tins of... food that we could... use and reems and reems of toilet paper,we didn't have to buy any for some years...

(c) Housing

In the early years, the challenge was to build houses to accommodate the growing staff numbers. This was not only to increase comfort, it was to give an air of permanence to the mission. Consequently there was a move from 'native-style' housing to 'European-style in native materials'. In 1922, Constance Olds moved from the sisters' house at Munda to the mission house at Bilua. Describing her new accommodation she wrote:

It is prettier than Roviana [Munda]. The house is the ordinary kind of mission-house; three rooms in a row, verandah all round, except at one end where it has been made into a study. Double French windows open on to both back and front verandahs from each room. Kitchen, store, bathroom, and a room for our cook-boys run off at right angles from the back verandah.

The nature of housing underwent a major change in the immediate post war period. Most of the mission buildings had been destroyed during World War II, and staff undertaking the rehabilitation lived in make-shift conditions, even by mission standards. Because of the presence of US Forces at Munda, Bilua was the centre for the rehabilitation of the BSIP. Effie Harkness recalled the beginning of the eighteen months she spent there:

...we lived first of all in what we called the stalls-an old building left by the Americans with a great big huge room with a concrete floor at one end, and then boxes - looked like horse boxes - three of them in a row which could be used as bedrooms. And then, at the back part you could put the stove and your basin for having a wash...If you wanted to wash [clothes] you went into the sea or out up to a creek.... And... before the stove was unpacked from the boat...we just did our cooking outside.

The housing slowly changed from 'make-shift' to the more standard style of 'temporary'. Stationed at Koau in 1949, Nancy and George Carter's house was perched on top of forty-four gallon drums, positioned in front of a bomb hole. This was not unusual. In post-war Bougainville everything was built in, around and on top of bomb holes. The situation was bad enough for Harry Voyce wryly to name a newly built church 'St. Mark's in the Bomb Holes'.

By the 1950s, the re-building programme was well under way. In 1953, Rewa Williamson described her accommodation, in a letter to her family:

...a native type building, comfortable, cool and easy to keep clean....In the house the walls and roof are thatched and sewn together native fashion while the floors are made of 5 ply. We have a big living room open at both ends with canvas blinds to keep out the rain when necessary. Our four bedrooms open off the side, and then a corridor runs along to the girls' bedroom, the kitchen, [and] bathroom...

The houses were designed to be cool. There were few doors and the windows were 'open', covered only by blinds to keep the rain out. This style of housing was preferable to Western-style accommodation. Sheena Watson and her husband Aleo were transferred from Bilua to Honiara on Guadalcanal. While the mission house on Bilua had been large and open, the house at Honiara was small and not as well ventilated.

Amenities inside the house were few. When New Zealand took control of the field in the early 1920s, there was no electricity. By the time Effie Harkness arrived in 1937, there was some electric light for lotu services, but not for the houses. Benzine, kerosene and hurricane lamps were used. In the late 1930s, internal telephone connections were installed on Munda. Cooking was done by wood stove, and refrigeration was initially by icy-ball. When the Voyces first went to Bougainville, John Goldie had not provided the funds for a water tank and drinking water had to be obtained from a river. Beryl Voyce made her point about the inconvenience of this when Goldie visited Siwai. Pouring water into a jug for a meal, she made sure that the sediment had settled at the bottom before carefully pouring it out into glasses. She gave the last one to Goldie. Soon afterwards she got her water tank.

In the post war period, kerosene-run refrigerators were provided but they were notoriously temperamental. With time, physical improvements were made, and electricity via generators was available in limited supply to most stations. However, when Nancy Cochrane went to the Solomons with her husband in 1970, she took a vacuum cleaner to a house that not only had no electricity, but had no carpets either.

Staff relations

In housing the women were organised according to marital status. Single women lived in the 'Sisters' House', although the nurses were housed separately at Bilua. Ideally each sister had a separate room but space and money did not always allow it. When Una Jones first arrived at Munda in 1924, she slept in the dining room. At other times when space was short, verandahs provided extra bedrooms. Wives lived with their husbands in houses provided for each couple, at times being isolated from the other staff. However, in the absence of adequate accommodation couples were requested to billet single women. When Synod could find no money to build a sisters' and girls' home at Skotolan, Elizabeth Common boarded with Allan and Louie Cropp, Australians who had pioneered the Skotolan station.

Mission workers therefore did not get to choose whom they were to live and work with. They were thrown together, and told to get on with the job and with each other. Personality conflicts could and did occur. These affected more than those who were directly at odds with each other. At times the entire station could become embroiled in the saga. In the early 1950s, one wife wrote to the General Secretary that as a result of a dispute 'sister was pitted against sister, husband against wife, and Methodist against Methodist.'

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

However, it was not only a matter of differences in personalities. Living and working in close quarters placed immense strain on the closest of friends, and the best of marriages. The disputes were not all sagas. Most were the cross, and later regretted, words spoken by overworked and overtired colleagues whose last break from each other was two and a half years previously. Conflicts were not peculiar to the Methodist missionaries; nor were they peculiar to only certain types of personalities. They were a product of mission conditions. Monotony, isolation and loneliness exerted stress on all who lived on a station.

Personal diaries reveal that week-days were spent at official jobs. Saturdays were for cleaning and baking, and Sundays were for lotu. Beginning each day with a dawn church service and working until the evening lotu, the monotony of life could become wearisome. Harry and Beryl Voyce regularly organised day trips away from the station for their staff. Likewise, Trevor and Gloria Shepherd who were on Bougainville in the post war period were known for their insistence on the 'need to have a break'. This not only provided an opportunity to 'break' from the work it provided a chance for the missionaries to socialise together and cope with loneliness.

Loneliness was an immense problem, both potentially and in reality. For some women, the potential problem was never realised. Neither Pamela Beaumont, Beryl Grice or Gladys Larkin were ever alienated by the solitude of living in the Solomons. Shortly before resigning from the mission in 1972, Grice wrote:

We...had a visit from a lone yachtsman who made a remark which amused me greatly. It would make a good cartoon - lone yachtsman talking to mission sister saying "Aren't you ever lonely?" I could honestly answer that in all the time I have been out here, although several times I have been alone on the station as to the colour of my skin, I have never ever been lonely.

However, despite friendships with the Islanders most women did suffer from loneliness to a lesser or greater extent, particularly the wives. Although the wives had a partner to share the emotional burden husbands were often away from the station as their designated tasks demanded extreme mobility. Nancy Carter recalled her family's experiences both at Munda and their earlier home, Kekesu:

[At Munda] he {George Carter} was... away half the year....As Chairman he was responsible for everything from Honiara...up to the top of Buka, and there was a mighty lot of water in between. And the kiddies used to say 'When's Dad coming home?' So there.. [were] a lot of times when the family had to manage without Dad....In a sense, those were the hard times....! used to worry about him on the small boats, because there was no contact....There was a radio sched. every day and if you managed to get your radio switched into the right place, you might hear something and you might not. If he was away in boats, you never knew when he was to come home. [Earlier] At Kekesu... when he was away at Synod,

..you could see all the footmarks backward and forwards from the windows in the front room that faced the sea.

This loneliness was often increased by the distance that was felt between the women and their friends and families in New Zealand. In 1924, Lina Jones wrote in her diary that the sight of the mountains of Guadalcanal made her realise how much sea lay in between the Solomons and her family. This entry, however, was not one of despair. A slight feeling of regret underlay the anticipation of adventure. In 1942, eighteen years after arriving in the islands, the distance Jones felt was magnified not only by miles, but also by events:

I have stood at the Graveside at Haevo [near Munda] many times - for white and coloured people. But not either at my own mother's or father's at home. They told me in letters of the beauty of the flowers at father's funeral & here today a boy was buried - no flowers - a rough coffin made of cases - no close relatives!'

At times, the women were strangely distanced from their church in New Zealand. While the New Zealand church was dividing over the issue of Methodists dancing, mission women were enjoying the displays of the Solomon dancing, and at times, joining in themselves. This distance was something that often separated new workers from old. Many workers were frustrated with pioneer John F. Goldie's paternalistic ideology, while a couple arriving in the late 1950s found those challengers to be 'ten years behind' the New Zealand church. Whatever the period, new arrivals always felt a difference between themselves and the old hands. This was caused not only by differences between the Solomons and New Zealand churches, but personal uncertainty in working in the shadow of 'old hands'.

Diversions came in the most ordinary guises. Letter writing and keeping diaries became important past-times. The women not only kept contact with friends and family outside the Solomons but also on other stations on the mission field. This was always stimulating, as other stations and other missions were different worlds. Also fellow missionaries were able to understand the problems each other faced. Consequently, mail was a considerable task. The completion of it was determined only by the arrival of the steamer. Lina Jones occasionally began her correspondence with the prefix: 'Time and tide wait for no man, it is said, neither will the steamer wait for our letters...'

In the 1920s, Goldie's introduction of a 'listening set' provided some evening entertainment. The radio also provided a further link with the outside world, its most popular use being to listen in to broadcasts of Australian church services. Birthdays and wedding anniversaries assumed important significance. This provided a reason to 'celebrate', and an excuse to escape from the monotony and frugality of mission life. However, it was not only the various anniversaries of the staff on the field that were noted. Diaries, journals and letters all show a significance attached to celebrating the birthdays of those in New Zealand.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Considering the possibility of boredom, it is little wonder that some developed a keen interest in particular fields. Lina Jones was renowned for her photographic skills. Spending a considerable amount of time taking and developing photos, she left an impressive personal collection of slides and photographs. Irene and Gordon Cornwell became fascinated with the anthropological details of the Buka people, taking special interest in anthropology as a subject. Norma Graves, a teaching sister, had an unusual method of unwinding. The routine of returning from school to the sisters' house each day, was lightened by a display of handstands throughout the house. Gladys Larkin was renowned for her determination to have a garden regardless of the station she was living on.

Friendships were also important. While disputes and personality clashes were a problem, many life-long friendships were made on the field. Rewa Williamson, a nurse, and Thelma Duthie, a teacher, were stationed at Kekesu between 1955 and 1960. Living together for five years, they struck-up a close friendship which lasted until Thelma Duthie's death in 1989. Harmony was encouraged by women who were able to maintain a steady influence. Effie Harkness was known to many contemporaries as a peace-maker and comforter, being described by one wife as totally 'unflappable'.

The women also had to work closely with the men. Grace McDonald was to become quite exasperated with the single men who visited the sisters' house. Their fascination with ethereal concepts became the butt of her dry Irish wit:

On Sundays at afternoon tea we seem to have the most abstruse discussions. Yester, it was the transmigration of souls. I said well if Hitler was Napoleon come back, is there only one stoking up down below now instead of two? Another time it was the unreality of matter.... This is not a table (says Allen [Hall]). It is a conglomerate mass of so-and-so atoms! Really, what we have to put up with!

As well, there were the relationships which developed into 'romances'. Several New Zealand sisters met their husbands on the mission field and five returned to serve as wives. Thus, the nature of 'courtship' on the mission field bears further examination.

Davinia (nee Clark) and Philip Taylor found their courtship on the mission field somewhat restrictive. Meeting at Munda in the 1950s they were bound not by European social mores, but by strict Solomon Islands moral and sexual codes. 'Respectable' Solomons couples did not socialise unchaperoned, and even going for walks alone was unacceptable. Unable to appear 'unrespectable', this type of local custom conditioned missionary relationships. Difficulties were overcome to a degree when couples were 'aided and abetted' by the married staff. Ann and Bob Baker, a lay missionary couple, opened their house to nursing sister Audrey Roberts and her beau, Rodney Fleury. This allowed the couple to spend time together. However, they discovered the repercussions of the high profile their courtship dubiously enjoyed.

Myra Fraser, the teaching sister at Munda, had to remove comments written by students on a school blackboard several times.

A further feature of these romances, was the sparse amount of time a couple could spend together. Davinia Clark and Philip Taylor became engaged at the end of their first terms. After furlough, he entered Theological College, while she returned to the Solomons to begin her second term. Marrying in New Zealand, they later returned to the Solomons. Joyce (nee McDonald) and Brian Sides had a similar experience. Between the time they became engaged and the time they married, the couple saw each other for a total of ten days over the intervening two years.

Parenthood

An important aspect of mission life for the wives, was that of bearing and raising children for few wives remained childless. In the early pioneering period wives remained in the islands for childbirth. From the 1920s on, the wives tended to 'go south' for maternity reasons. From the late 1930s onwards, as the medical facilities improved, more women remained in the islands.

Moyna Silvester returned to New Zealand in 1936 for the birth of her daughter. She arrived in February, the baby was born in May, and the pair returned to the Solomons three months later. However, her return to the Solomons was not encouraging. The attitude which she was greeted with by the white population is indicative of contemporary attitudes regarding 'respectable white women'. Mrs McEachron, a planter's wife, was blunt in expressing her opinion of the likely success the Silvesters would have in raising their daughter; she did not believe that it could be done.

Women who remained in the Solomons for the birth of their children did so in the immediate pre-war and post-war period. Part of the reason for being unable to remain in the islands, was the absence of a doctor. While Amy Leadley returned to New Zealand for one birth, her third child was born in the Solomons. Dr Alan Rutter, with his wife Elizabeth, was appointed after the Depression, when the medical mission was 'officially' re-established and a hospital had been built at Bilua.

Childbirth in the Solomons was an experience in itself. Efforts were made in two directions to aid the expectant mothers. First, attempts to arrange for a nurse to be on the station during the final months of pregnancy were often made, although this was not always possible. One woman living on an isolated and understaffed station in the post-war period had three miscarriages and one still birth, which she had to deliver herself. While the lack of ready medical attention during the initial stages of pregnancy is problematic, the lack of attention given after the miscarriages demands censure. This particular woman was to leave the isolated station only twice in the fifteen years she served there. The second direction efforts were made in, was for expectant mothers to be taken to a hospital for the birth, or for a doctor or nurse to be

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

present. This was more successful, and by the time the full term was reached, deliveries were normally trouble-free.

However, even those with relatively trouble-free deliveries expressed concern about the potential difficulties caused by isolation. One disillusioned woman wrote: 'No one warned us not to reproduce, so that's exactly what we did.' Less extreme were the recollections Averil Yearbury made of her experience of childbirth on Bougainville:

Bearing & raising children, I think was the most difficult part of my life there [in the Islands]. We were a long way from a D[octo]r & had to travel by canoe both for prenatal care & baby's circumcision...

For Nancy Carter, travelling to hospital while in labour was daunting. It meant braving waves to climb into a canoe in order to be 'ferried' to the hospital. The discomfort of the trip was eased by the attention of nursing sister, Edna White. However, all medical attention was not so lovingly given. As the mission's medical superintendent from the late 1940s through until the 1960s, Dr. Gerald Hoult took his commitment to the Islanders especially seriously. Consequently, he openly regarded the waiting for a European wife to go into labour as a nuisance.

Like the birth itself, raising children on a mission station was a unique experience. As the duties allotted to the men demanded considerable mobility, raising the children fell largely to the wives. However, as white children were novelties in the Solomons most mothers recall an abundance of willing hands ready to care for the 'waet pikanini'. When Nancy Carter had her first child at Buin in 1950, her son was the first white child on the mission station for over a decade.



Mrs Rutter paddling her own - with assistance

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Mothers had to be vigilant, however, about the health of their children. There was danger of malaria, fever, tropical ulcers and a host of other complaints. Despite the hazards most parents considered their children to be safer in the Islands than in New Zealand. Very conscious of the dangers, parents took all the advised precautions. Anti-malarial medicine was administered regularly. Because of the danger of infection from cuts and bites Sheena Watson bathed her children twice daily. While the Carters gave their children free run of the station, they did impose definite out-of-bounds areas.

Despite this, some families experienced close-calls and tragedies. When Frank Leadley, the eldest son of Amy and Clary Leadley, was seriously ill in 1941 his death was only narrowly avoided. Elizabeth Rutter, a bacteriologist, discovered that Frank had the same blood type as her husband, Dr Allan Rutter. Using his own blood, Dr Rutter then performed a transfusion. Still seriously ill, Frank was taken first to Sydney's Children's Hospital, and then to Waikato Hospital in New Zealand. He later recovered. Other parents were not so fortunate. After World War II the Luxton family returned to the Solomons. Three year old Moyna Luxton suddenly took ill and died a few days later of cerebral malaria. Such deaths were not common.

Education was another concern. Irene and Gordon Cornwell encouraged their children to learn the Petats language. However, to ensure that they learnt English as well, only English was allowed to be spoken in the house. A wariness of Pijin saw the Cornwell children forbidden to speak that language. While Nancy and George Carter did not put a restriction on the speaking of Pijin, they too insisted on only English in the house. Primarily, this was to avoid language problems while home on furlough. What the white children learned through contact with the local children often opened the eyes of the adult missionaries. The Carters were very aware of the ideological differences between the pre- and post-war worlds. They were horrified when they heard their children's voices chiming in with a derogatory song sung by the black skinned people of Bougainville about the red skinned people of the New Guinea Highlands.

The schooling ages for children in the Solomons were out of line with those in New Zealand. While New Zealand children normally began school at five, their Solomon Islands counterparts did not begin until they were seven. Correspondence lessons became a standard medium of education. Ngaire Silvester was taught at home by her mother. It was a job that Moyna Silvester found demanding not least because of the constant interruptions to the lessons. Moyna Silvester wrote:

...it seems almost impossible to escape for two and a half hours....I've no doubt that we'll get through somehow but I've been warned about irregularity...and...even to give directions to anyone at the door takes her mind off and it has to be dragged back.

In the pre-war era, mission children were eligible for correspondence lessons offered by the New Zealand correspondence school, but they were not marked. Because Moyna Silvester was not a qualified teacher and as she had no guidance from the

correspondence school, she was concerned about the teaching mistakes she might have been making. As her daughter was the only white child on pre-war Vella Lavella, there was nobody to gauge her progress against. By the 1960s marking was available' Therefore Alice McDonald, who was stationed on post-war Choiseul, was able to get her children's work marked. The difficulty was in re-interesting her sons in work they had completed months before. Even those who were qualified teachers had difficulty teaching their own children. On Munda in the 1960s, this was overcome by Nancy Carter and Pat Gatman 'exchanging' children.

As the children became older, and the need for education became more urgent, they were sent to boarding schools. At various stages the Voyce children were sent to schools in New Zealand and Australia. Likewise, when the Silvesters returned to the Solomons after World War II, they left their daughter at the Buckland Road Orphanage for schooling. She remained there until 1948, doing later schooling in Melbourne. In latter years, secondary schools in Rabaul sufficed. By the mid-1960s, the Carters were able to arrange for their daughter to go to Goldie College near Munda.

Physical safety

The physical safety of white women living in non-white cultures has received considerable attention. The reasons why Sir Hubert Murray passed the White Women's Protection Ordinance in Papua in 1926, introducing the death penalty for any Papuan man who sexually assaulted a white woman, were analysed by Amirah Inglis. She concluded that the passage of the Ordinance was the result of popular hysteria on the part of both white men and white women. Claudia Knapman came to a similar conclusion in her study of white women in Fiji. The sexual fears that did exist in colonial Fiji were shared by the men and the women of the European population.

In total contrast, reports of Methodist women missionaries serving in the western Solomon Islands being or feeling threatened are few. There are minor incidents scattered throughout the fifty years between 1922 and 1972. 'Peeping incidents' were the result of curious eyes, eager to see what it was like inside the white person's house. In 1929, the New Zealand women and the Solomons girls were disturbed by an intruder in the sisters' house. This resulted in Dr. Ted Sayers and the Rev. Frank Hayman sleeping on the verandah of the sisters' house, and Solomon Islands 'boys' sleeping on the steps. There was one report of a New Zealand wife putatively being 'attacked' in the bush, while 'unpleasant incidents' involving nurses at Munda returning home during night hours were mentioned in the Mission Board minutes in 1967. The entry however, made no distinction between the European and Solomons nurses, nor did it elaborate on the nature of the 'unpleasant incidents'. Diane Langmore found a similar lack of concern amongst the white women of the nineteenth century Papuan missions.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

From the beginning of the period, the New Zealand women displayed a trust in the Solomon Islands male, and a belief in their own physical safety. In 1923, May Barnett spoke of her voyage from Bilua to Munda demonstrating an attitude that white corresponds with 'good', but black does not necessarily correspond with 'bad':

My trip here from Bilua was quite an experience. Mr. Goldie had to go to Tulagi, so sent the Tandanya for me. I was the only white person on board, a woman at that; but I was as safe and well taken care of as though the crew had been white men...

While possessing some prejudices related to their own culture, the women adjusted to the island situation and felt no threat. In 1924, Lina Jones related the late night delivery of the mail, explaining how she answered the knock at the door:

I asked who was there & the answer came "letters." I jumped out of bed, pulled on the lights, & presented myself just as I was to the letter carrier - one of my class boys....So long as you've something on, it doesn't matter much to these people what it is.

Jones indicates that the same thing would be unacceptable in New Zealand, by ending the anecdote with: 'I hope you are not too shocked...!' Despite this, her attitude is not one of recklessness, it is one of practicality.

Six years later, Lina Jones' attitude was the same. Having been soaked during a journey to a nearby island, she changed her clothes en route. Shielded from the male missionaries and Solomon Islands passengers by a blanket Jones commented:

There was much chaffing from the men, as you might expect, but that didn't matter. We can mostly give them as good as they give us.

In 1926, the same year that the White Women's Protection Ordinance was introduced in Papua, Beryl Voyce became the first white woman to work for the Methodist mission in the Siwai region. Beryl Voyce, like most of her female colleagues throughout the period, never felt or expressed any fears or threat to her physical well-being from Island men. Harry and Beryl Voyce arrived in Bougainville, initially living with Allan Cropp at Skotolan. The two men then travelled to organise the construction of a house at Siwai where the Voyces were to be stationed. Cropp then went to Rabaul to get married. His return to the station gave Beryl Voyce the impression that he was delaying their departure. Suspicious, she took up the matter with his wife.

...I said to his wife "What's the big idea that Allan is going on like he is. I've got a feeling that he just doesn't want us to go to Siwai. What is it?" And she looked at me and at first she wouldn't say anything. And I said "Go on. Why doesn't he want us to go?" "Because you are only a young girl and everybody down there is running around naked and he doesn't like to take you down there."

I said "For heaven's sake. I've got to face them sooner or later and I think I know what the human body looks like. I want to go."

Poor old Allan. He was ashamed of them. It was alright for Harry to go but I was too young and he didn't want me there with men running round naked...

It was not merely a matter of modesty that Cropp was worried about. He was renowned for his attitude to white women on the station, at one time becoming furious with teacher Vivian Adkin for allowing male students into the sisters' house. He was concerned about the physical safety of the women, particularly when they were on their own, even though they themselves felt no threat. Beryl Voyce recalled:

He [Cropp] didn't like me [Beryl Voyce] staying by myself at Siwai. I had to stay with Louie [Cropp at Skotolan on Buka Island] while...[Reverends Cropp and Voyce] went to Synod. I didn't mind I had a good time with Louie. We used to go off to Petats and other villages. Usaiah [Sotutu, a Fijian missionary] was there at that time and [his wife] Margaret. I used to stay in Siwai for weeks on end and never think anything about it. I think I was safer there than I would have been here [in New Zealand]. I used to go out into the bush at night time after maternity cases. Harry's father was staying with us once and I woke him up one night and said "You've got to look after the children. I'm going with one of the boys through the bush to a woman who is having trouble having a baby." He said "You're not to go through the bush at night..." I said, "I'm going so look after the children." He was quite upset. He was wandering round in his pyjamas when I came home....He soon got over that...

Despite Cropp's protestations few other missionaries were pre-occupied with the matter. Most women associated freely with the Solomon Islands men. It was the local men who acted as guides for the New Zealanders when they were travelling. In 1934, one outing to the caves near Munda involved a slippery journey through bush and muddy water. Describing the journey there in her diary, Ada Lee wrote:

Many of our slides were humorous & the boys seemed to enjoy them immensely. We paused again before entering the big cave when Biliki proceeded to entertain the company with an illustrated account of one of my slides & how he had endeavoured to stop it by placing his hands back & front of me & I had neatly slid into his arms. Roars of laughter greeted his finale...

Even during the few moments that Lee did consider her safety, she returned to her feeling of security:

At one period... I was alone in the darkness [of the caves] with two boys. My thoughts flashed - What if? But I knew I could trust them. What a difference it made.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

It was not uncommon for women, both wives and sisters, to be left on their own on stations. Davinia Taylor, nee Clark, found herself in that situation many times when she was a sister:

...I didn't feel threatened in anyway at that stage [1950-1960s]....! think I would have been a bit cagey about living on my own at a later date. But in 1950...I could go any where with anyone, there was never any suggestion of any threat to person. ..It was a very safe place, and missionaries were very well looked after.

Generally the white women showed no concern for themselves, because they did not feel threatened. There no locks on the bedroom doors or on the door to the house. However, there were locks on the girls' dormitory where the students slept. This was to protect them, and a carry over from the ruling that no Island male over the age of sixteen be allowed in the sisters' house because of the presence of teenage Solomons females. In 1953, Jane Bond raised the matter of the physical safety of nurses travelling between their house and the hospital at night. It was not her European colleagues she was concerned about however, it was the safety of the Solomon Islands nurses. Arguing for a new nurses' home to be built near the hospital she wrote:

Also I do beg for a more convenient home for our Natiue nurses. During this week one of our nurses was "attacked" and greatly upset when returning home at dusk.

The fears of physical safety that were experienced came from the environment rather than humans. Earthquakes were common in the Solomons. Munda was struck by a sizeable earthquake in 1926, hurting none of the mission staff but damaging property. There were also other 'dangers' that had to be dealt with. Davinia Taylor recalled one occasion while she was out travelling:

We... travelled by...outrigger canoe in that area, and one of the first times we went up the coast there was an argument amongst the boys and girls as to whether what we could see was a log or a crocodile. And then the 'log' got up and slowly slid into the water...

However, little of the animal and insect life was dangerous, it just took some adjusting to. Thus, the women had a relative freedom in the Solomons. They were not restricted in the same way that they would have been in New Zealand.

World War II

The biggest threat to the safety of the women missionaries was not exclusive to them. When Japan entered World War II, worries surrounding physical safety applied to both male and female, Melanesian and European. However, it was the white women who were first affected. The initial action taken in relation to the safety of white women in the Solomons happened in 1940. The Government refused re-entry to all women and children due to return to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, and the

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

British Solomon Islands Protectorate. Beryl Voyce and Ada Lee, in New Zealand on furlough, were denied permission to return.

In December of 1941, a panicked government official evacuated all women and children in New Guinea, including Bougainville and Buka. The action was rapid and disorganised. In the words of Elizabeth Common: '...it was too hurried for more than those nearby to know of it.' The haphazard evacuation was later described by Ruth Alley, and was the last time she saw her husband, Don Alley, alive:

At 12 midnight, one week before Christmas, [1941] a Government official arrived, and in the weirdness of a solitary torch-light in formed us [that] the children and myself must come south, and to be ready in day or two. I expressed a desire to go and live 'bush' up in the mountains, as we had already sent food and clothing in readiness...Two or three evenings later a native police boy arrived with a letter stating [that] I was to be ready at daylight in the morning. With two suitcases...of clothes, myself and our two small sons boarded a filthy little boat, and departed, leaving a sad group on the beach, and saddest of all, our Daddy [Don Alley who later died on the 'Montevideo Maru' after being captured by the Japanese]...

Half a day's journey brought us to Buka Passage, where [the] Japanese are now "settled in". There I linked up with Mrs. [Mavis] Luxton and Sister Elizabeth Common. That night we slept on a shakedown on the deck of...[the 'Bilua'] and next morning set out for Rabaul... we had to "live" on the open boat, eleven woman and four children, including Mrs. Luxton s wee Tommy of 2 years, and Peter, 6 months....! lay right on top of my two, so as to keep them...warm....Mrs. Luxton was on a deck chair, tiny Peter [Luxton] was in his basket, and Tommy [Luxton] was also on the deck chair, the latter sliding about the deck as the ship tossed and pitched...

Early in January 1942, the remaining wives in the BSIP also 'went South' on board the last steamer. By mid-January 1942 only a handful of sisters remained. This group were evacuated in a desperate journey on board the *Fauro Chief*. It took them in a flight across the Pacific, from the Solomons to Australia, armed with a sextant and a school atlas. The atlas gave only a general outline of the coast of Australia. The trip was carried out in the hurricane season and there were a few close calls. One woman, not mission staff, was swept overboard. A fellow passenger, who had been showering at the time, dived in after her. The *Fauro Chief* was turned around as quickly as possible. Once the woman was safe, he did not want to come out of the Pacific; he had left his towel in the shower.

The interruption of World War II affected the women in another way. Each had to find some means of support in New Zealand in the interim. Complementing her Solomons work Ada Lee obtained a position at Rangiatea Maori Girls Home. From the April of 1942 until late October of 1945, Effie Harkness worked with the Child Welfare

Department, visiting homes, and spending much of her time in court. Lina Jones was employed by the Overseas Mission Office.

Cultural observers

Over the fifty years under examination, the women had opportunity to act as cultural observers. It was not only impressions of Solomon Islanders that the women reflect, but attitudes that the Solomon Islanders had to them. Lina Jones wrote home about one incident:

One day I was in the bathroom, when Salome called to me that a 'white person' was coming. I began to guess Mrs. Watkins, Mrs Sim etc. but she said "No" to all I mentioned. So I said "Is it a boy?" (all males are "boys"!) She said "No", "Is it a woman?" "No" I was puzzled, and asked further questions till she gave me the lead and I said "Mr. [Frank] Hayman." That was right. So I said "Isn't Mr. [Frank] H[ayman] a 'boy'?" "No." "Well, what is he then?" "He's a white person." - A category to itself apparently!

The different attitudes towards marriage held by the New Zealanders and the Solomon Islanders were often discussed. Ada Lee fielded a battery of questions from the Solomon Islands girls, and had difficulty explaining her single status to them, contradicting herself in the attempt:

Why was I not going to get married?' I had not found a man. 'Were there no more in New Zealand?' Yes lots but not found the right one 'Then I would stay like S[ister]Lina [Jones]?' Yes. 'Or would I be like S[ister] Lilian [Berry], get married when I am old.' I tried to explain that in N.Z. all girls did not get married, there were not enough boys. That was easily solved. 'There are lots too many Solomon Is[lands] boys. "How could one explain?!"

The women did have a high regard for much of the indigenous culture of the Solomon Islanders. Impressed and amused by the manner in which one couple acted at a christening service, Effie Harkness wrote:

...Amy [Leadley] and I nearly disgraced ourselves at Lotu this morning during a christening service when the Mother not only [breast] fed the child before the event, but continued to do so while Mr. Goldie actually christened the child....Well, I was managing to keep a perfectly straight face... but Amy sits on the opposite side of the Church from us, and I caught her eye and she was in the middle of stifling a large grin, so we then had a real job trying to compose ourselves.

Pat Hulks, a teacher stationed on Buka between 1961 and 1968, 'moonlighted' as the station's film projectionist showing films for the school pupils on Friday nights. Although they were not comedies, the films regularly had the Island students in fits of laughter, highly entertained by the antics of the white people on the screen.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Witnessing the hysterics, Hulks was often left wondering what everyone was laughing at.

The New Zealand women felt it was not only the Mission Board that expected the missionaries to cope in situations they were unused to. The Islanders also had this expectation. Out of a respect for Western technology and a different kind of knowledge, the Solomon Islanders held the European population in high regard. Beryl Grice recalled her impressions of the way in which whites were viewed:

...they would see machinery and planes and electricity and they would think that...[whites] were so clever. And they heard while I was there about the men going to the moon...and they just could not get over that. So they thought that Europeans were just super...humans. But I would have to say to them, "Well you get one of those lost in the bush and they wouldn 't be able to survive after a few days whereas you know exactly what to do. And which of those men that go up in rockets would be able to make his own bit of rope from the bark of a tree?" They didn 't think that was brilliant but I-I did.

Summary

There were many different experiences involved in living as a woman missionary in the Solomon Islands. Each woman had to adjust to two major changes in her life-style; the first was living in a very different country, the second was living on a mission station. Both provided the potential for difficulties and required a considerable amount of flexibility. A knowledge of the daily life of a missionary and the resulting stresses conduces an understanding of the nature of her work.

4: WORK

'...it wasn't...what you said, it was how you did.'

Irene Cornwell, 1991

The involvement of women in the work of the Methodist mission was crucial to its operation. The bulk of the medical and teaching work was carried out by the sisters, who operated within the official mission structures. The wives were assigned the vital but unofficial role of support not only for their husbands' work but also that of the sisters. The distinct difference between the two roles makes it useful to treat them separately.

The sisters

The work performed by the sisters was official and recognised. Their jobs were structured and centred within the mission institutions. They were responsible for the running of the schools, the hospitals, and the boarding schools. As such, their jobs developed with the expansion of the mission, changing in nature with the move towards localisation.

The medical work

Primarily involved in the medical mission, the work of the nurses followed four main patterns. The first was their part in pioneering hospitals and medical centres. Lilian Berry, the first qualified nurse to be appointed, was sent to Munda in 1922. Her task was to consolidate the health measures carried out by non-medical staff and prepare for the first doctor, Ted Sayers, who arrived in 1927. Berry, who remained with the mission for eleven years, established the first hospital and dispensary there under difficult conditions. The initial hospital building was old and leaky, and instruments were sterilised in a kerosene tin over an open fire. Further, the Solomon Islanders themselves were not used to hospital methods. Even when the new hospital was erected after two and a half years, conditions were still very basic. The new building was a leaf structure furnished with cupboards made out of benzine boxes. When the hospital, and therefore the doctor, were shifted to Bilua in 1929, Berry remained stationed at Munda.

During the Depression, the staffing of the medical mission was further reduced; in 1933 the two doctors (and several of the nurses) were retrenched. Edna White was instrumental in restoring the work at Bilua on Vella Lavella. Initially serving from 1927 until family commitments forced her resignation in 1932, she returned to the field in 1936. Her task was to re-establish the medical work at Bilua, and prepare for the return of the doctor. The medical services were then continued until 1942 when the threat of the Japanese invasion prompted evacuation.

The resumption of the medical work after World War II (which was initially confined to the BSIP) was again the responsibility of the nurses. Both the health of the people

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

and the health services had seriously deteriorated in the interim. While a new doctor was not appointed until 1948, the first nurses Joy Whitehouse and Grace McDonald, returned to the field in 1945. Both women had worked on the mission prior to the war and were familiar with both the people and mission conditions.



Sister Winifred and Gloria attend the sick

In 1947, the medical work on Bougainville was also re-established, again under difficult conditions. 'New chums' Merle Carter and Winifred Poole were appointed to Teop and Buka respectively. Before proceeding to Bougainville, both had gained an introduction to tropical medicine, spending three months at Honiara hospital on Guadalcanal. En route to Teop Merle Carter was again diverted for six months to Buin. Initially the hospital there consisted of a table and a seat out in the open. While the demand for her services was small it increased exponentially when it became known that a nurse was in the area. In her first few weeks at Buin Carter saw only a few people; then she treated seventy patients in one day. The next day she saw ninety. Techniques were primitive; needles had to be sharpened on a piece of slate and instruments were sterilised in a saucepan. In-patients who could not be accommodated in the hastily built and temporary hospital were placed in the girls' dormitory. One of the greatest skills that Carter needed was the ability to improvise.

The second pattern is the front-line role the nurses played in administering health care. In the absence of a doctor during the Depression, the limited medical services were continued by Sisters Elizabeth Common and Vera Cannon on Bougainville, and Mrs Amy Leadley at Munda. At other times, because the doctor's responsibilities were so widely spread, the nurses remained the primary health workers at the local level. Their duties ranged from dispensing and giving copious injections to dentistry and surgery. They dealt with influenza and poliomyelitis epidemics and treated such diseases as

malaria and leprosy. Yaws was also a considerable problem. The most renowned yaws case was that of Stephen Gadapeta, one of Lilian Berry's earliest patients and the first baptised Methodist of Choiseul. His mobility was limited to moving along the ground on his buttocks and one heel, as a result of his ankylosed joints. After being cured with a series of injections, and a course of massage, Gadapeta credited Berry with saving his life.

Village visiting, or patrol work, provided an important contact with the Islanders. This involved conducting lotu services for women and children in addition to the medical work. However, extensive contact at the village level was restricted by the workload on the station and by transport difficulties. Except for an annual trip encompassing the entire circuit, patrol was normally limited to half-day or day trips away from the station. The longer trips required more time and, except for the in-land stations on Bougainville, the use of a mission boat as well. The boats were expensive to run and in high demand. A notable exception to this, was the nursing service pioneered by Vera Cannon during the 1930s on the north-east coast of Choiseul. Often travelling by canoe she moved between native-style' medical outposts using them as bases for her patrol work. That work was regarded as her most valuable contribution to the medical mission.

Infant and maternal health was an important area of the medical work that occupied much of the nurses' time. In 1928, Elizabeth Common, the first nurse to be appointed to Bougainville, pioneered the medical work amongst the women and children on Buka. Stationed at Skotolan she established a home for sick and orphaned infants, and by 1931 was operating a maternity hospital, as well as holding infant health clinics. For many nurses infant and maternal health was the most rewarding aspect of their work. Mary Addison, a nurse who served for twelve years, was delighted over the safe delivery and survival of triplets in 1957. But the work could also be very unpleasant. Merle Farland, stationed at Bilua in the late 1930s, recorded one gruelling case which had required surgery:

The...op[eration] was a filthy one, and I won't enter into details: but the object... was the removal - in sections - of a dead baby - dead for five months. The operation] was successful and the woman is in a very good condition, but we have all had baths and washed our hair and are not too sure yet whether the odour has vanished.

Health education was seen as an effective way of reducing rates of infant mortality. Coralie Murray who nursed in the Solomon Islands from 1929 until 1931 was emphatic in stating: 'You taught as you went.' In emphasising the importance of teaching, Murray was stating a personal belief; that the reasons for diagnoses, treatment and health advice should be explained to the patient regardless of race. Post-war, the practice of 'teaching as you went' became policy with the institution of 'education classes'. These classes concentrated on child and maternal health, continuing the work carried out on patrols, at prenatal clinics, and in women's groups.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

The emphasis that was placed on women prompted Gladys Larkin to deviate from normal practice. Believing in a 'dichotomy of education' for men and women and perceiving an imbalance in health education, Larkin instituted 'fathercraft classes' on Munda in the mid-1960s. As a nurse she became aware that the married women admitted to hospital were hurried home by their husbands, regardless of how ill they were. Men could not cope without their wives to care for the children and cook meals. Enlisting the help of the male nurses she began a series of lectures teaching men a range of skills from how to feed a baby through to how to make a first aid kit.

Although the nurses were the health professionals that the Islanders were in contact with most, the nurses had to earn the trust of the people. In the 1960s, Gladys Larkin and a newly appointed nurse divided the hospital workload between them. Larkin increased her tutoring hours, while the other nurse took responsibility for the maternity work. Larkin found that pregnant women would loiter outside the lecture room door to see her because they did not know the new nurse. Larkin herself experienced this reserve among her patients when she had to relieve on Bougainville. An experienced missionary, she had been expecting to begin immediately at the hospital. However the patients, who were unfamiliar with her, hid.

The third pattern was that the limited supply of doctors resulted in the nurses doing the work of a doctor. They were called on to make diagnoses that they felt themselves unqualified to be making. In 1941, Grace McDonald remarked on a visit to Munda by the mission doctor:

...I was very glad to see D[octo]r, not that there was much he could do for any of my patients, still just to have my diagnosis confirmed was something!

The isolation, lack of staff and limited finance placed nurses in a position where they simply had to cope with duties they were neither qualified nor experienced for.

There were other occasions when the most the nurses could do, was stand and watch. Davinia Taylor recalled one 'devastating' experience:

...I can remember having a very bad maternity case...it was the only one that we lost because we didn't have transport. It was quite an ordeal to be with a woman for several days, knowing she was going to die...land that] we couldn't do anything about it... We had no telerradio, no aeroplanes, we had no boats that could go 200 miles to the nearest doctor.. ..And she... had already laboured in the village for a couple of days before she came to us. All we could do was give her care. We did as much as we could but we couldn't save her life. It was devastating...

The amount of work and limited staff numbers also meant that the nurses had to rely on their unqualified colleagues. In 1950, teaching sister Ada Lee recorded in her diary:

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Pamela [Beaumont, a teaching sister, and I] were working again on the [girls' education] Curriculum when in came a man with an 8" gash on the leg...Pamela helped hold the forceps for Merle [Carter] whilst I gave the anaesthetic. Merle worked for...[one and a half hours] suturing in three layers.

Several years later, another teacher assisting in a skin graft, not only put the patient under, she knocked herself out as well.

The fourth area of the nursing duties, was training Solomon Islanders to assist with the hospital work. This increased contact at village level, and provided help for the sisters. However, the use of such staff was not without problems. The training was time consuming, and some nurses felt that they could do the job quicker themselves. As well, mistakes were made. At Bilua in 1941, a 'hospital boy' gave ten times the normal 'sunis' dose to a group of patients. This resulted in severe poisoning from which five patients died. It was three days before the government doctor arrived to assist Joy Whitehouse and her remaining hospital staff. In the subsequent government inquiry, the 'hospital boy' admitted responsibility for the overdose.

Despite the tragic circumstances of 1941, the use of Solomons staff enabled the New Zealand nurses to work over a wider area. Merle Farland's experience in World War II proved the value of training local staff. By the end of January 1942, Farland was the only qualified health worker on the Methodist mission. Refusing to be evacuated, she saw the medical work as her primary obligation. Continuing the work involved drug rationing and staff re-organisation, as well as treating patients herself. On Bilua, she left the hospital in the charge of two 'trained' Solomon Islands nurses. Delegating much responsibility to them left Farland free to travel and cover a wider population. The Japanese occupation restricted her movements and she travelled at night. After six months, Farland noted the following:

Things would have been difficult at Bilua now if we had refused to trust the [hospital] girls [before the War]...now I am reaping the result [of the training]....The Bilua women seem to have great faith in both Tite & Madgie.

However, Farland was not advocating complete independence. She was adamant that the Solomon Islanders needed supervision by white staff.

Post-war, the Solomons staff were trained with a different end in mind: the object for the New Zealand missionaries was to 'work themselves out of a job'. The standard of training was raised accordingly. The emphasis on this concern increased throughout the post-war period and was closely related to the issue of independence. In February 1961, Gladys Larkin established a Nurse Training School at Munda under the government curriculum. By 1966, the Tonu hospital on Bougainville under Mary Addison had been recognised as a Nurse Aid Training School. This type of training began to occupy more of the time of the New Zealand nurses. With Solomon Islanders

attaining high levels of professional qualifications, the need for New Zealand nurses decreased.

The educational work

Lina Jones, the first qualified teacher to be appointed by the New Zealand Mission Board, was a major figure in the education system during her service of twenty one war-interrupted years. Arriving at Munda in 1924, her task was more than teaching. She reorganised the primary school on the head station, dividing it into a junior ('kinda') and senior primary school. She also standardised methods of teaching, setting and marking work. In initiating, and later developing a new school system, trial and error were the only reliable guides. The system that she created formed the basis of the Methodist schools until the government involvement in education in the post-war era. Assisting Jones in the pre-war era, were Ada Lee and Effie Harkness, who began their service in 1934 and 1937 respectively.

The New Zealand women taught a diverse range of subjects; reading writing and mathematics were the core. In contrast to New Zealand schools, the first priority of the junior school syllabus was literacy in the lingua franca. At Munda, the sisters taught Roviana as a first language. In the senior primary school they taught English as a second language. Music and current events were also taught, as was physical education, which initially took the form of sports after school. Free time and games figured prominently in the early years, as did Bible studies and social studies. Lina Jones persuaded the old men of the village to go into the school and teach the young students about their customs. There is a curious juxtaposition here between the medical work that discouraged 'bad' customs, and the teaching work that attempted to preserve the 'nice' ones.

The scope of teaching was impressive considering the equipment available. Text books had to be created by the sisters themselves, because there were none. Effie Harkness recalled:

We thought it was essential that they [the Solomon Islands students] learn to read and enjoy their own language, and we had [made] books of Solomon Islands...legends...so they could read in their own language.

The teaching sisters also trained their own assistants spending one afternoon a week at teachers' class. In the teachers' class, they made equipment, charts, and prepared lessons for the following week. The syllabus had to be attractive because school attendance was not compulsory.

The sisters had to compete with a variety of other interests. Consequently, reasons for absence were diverse. Parents would leave the area for a week or more taking their children with them. Girls who attended from nearby villages, especially those in the senior primary school, were often required at home. When boats arrived that needed unloading, John Goldie would take the older boys out of school. The weather and

village celebrations both affected attendance. School hours were limited and ended at lunch time; gardens had to be made to feed the students. Epidemics ranging from infantile paralysis to influenza resulted in the temporary closure of the school.

Although the education system, which Lina Jones had established and developed with the assistance of Ada Lee and Effie Harkness, changed after the war, it was those three women who re-established the schools in the immediate post-war period. In 1945, Jones and Harkness returned first to Bilua, and eighteen months later, they transferred to Munda. Lee returned to Bougainville in 1946.

However, the mission could no longer rely solely on the efforts of only three qualified teachers. Between 1949 and 1952, six new teachers were appointed. In 1949, Joyce McDonald became the first fully qualified teacher to be permanently stationed at Bilua. By 1950, Myra Fraser had replaced Lina Jones at Munda and in 1951, Nancy Ball took over the school at Sasamuqa. In that same year, Pamela Beaumont and Helen Whitlow were appointed to Koau and Skotolan respectively; they were the first teachers to be sent to the Bougainville region since Ada Lee in 1938. By 1952, a third teacher was working on Bougainville; Thelma Duthie was stationed at Kekesu.

In the mid-1950s the Government became more involved in the education system, giving financial assistance which was badly needed. Conditions were worse than they had been in the pre-war era. Teaching had been reduced to 'chalk and talk' as often that was all there was to work with. As well, grandfathers and grandchildren often attended the same classes. Government and mission changes resulted in the junior primary schools returning to the villages, and higher standards of education being attempted. By the late 1960s, Eileen Schick, a teacher, was appointed to the position of Education Secretary, representing the Methodist schools to the government.

Despite the changes, the mission's education system still depended upon the commitment of individual women. The teaching sisters oversaw the village schools and in that were faced with a frustrating job. The village schools were run by Solomon Islands teachers with varying degrees of 'training' and the teaching sisters on the station were their first back-ups, assisting as they could. The village teachers visited the station regularly for training, advice, and moral support. Beryl Grice, who taught from 1957 until 1972, recalled the situation she had to assist with:

...[The village teachers] had such difficult conditions - the cockroaches would eat up all the books and the white ants would burrow into all the cupboards. They'd have nowhere to put charts and things. They wouldn't even have a drawing pin, the blackboards would be carried off on a wet day as an umbrella and not returned. The equipment was such a struggle really....And also every school...was composite classes - and the [village] teachers would have little ones, middle size ones, and big ones all in the one room...That was the very hardest thing I think for [the village] teachers...to sort out a timetable that could

cope with all these ages...But the teachers loved coming into [the stations for] courses. They needed to be recognised...

The station schools drew their students from the village schools and the sisters set and marked the entrance exam. The top students would then attend the station school. But once the students had received a primary education, there was little for them to go on to. Myra Fraser found that her biggest frustration in her career of twenty one years, was that despite the fact that the mission employed their first qualified secondary school teacher in 1964, only the top five percent of the primary school were able to continue on to high school, regardless of how eager or capable they were.

However, the group that were consistently disadvantaged were the girls. In the pre-war years, and the immediate post-war era, there was little scope for girls' education. The schools were station-based, and the Solomon Islanders were reluctant to allow girls to live outside the authority of the village. Girls from nearby villages attended freely, as distance did not necessitate them living away from home. Consequently, education was restricted to teaching the mores of Christian domesticity. Girls who were engaged to Solomons teachers, those who were orphaned, and the few who were given permission to live away from the village were boarded in the sisters' house, and were trained in the art of being a 'good Christian wife'.

Housework was taught by giving the girls duties around the house and mothercraft was taught by delegating responsibility for the orphaned or ill babies in the house, to the girls. As well as the work routine, there were firm rules governing the running of the sisters' house. Because of strict Solomons mores, the sisters had to supervise contact between the house girls and Solomons boys. In 1941, one case of a Solomons male continuously visiting a mission girl resulted in several headmen calling a meeting with mission staff. However, a related problem was the result of a conflict of interest between the mission and the Solomon Islanders. In the eyes of the New Zealand women, any Christian Solomons man was an acceptable husband for a Christian Solomons girl. However, parents often thought otherwise, objecting to a man because he came from a different island.

In 1932, Lina Jones attempted to improve the lot of girls' education by creating a girls' class in the senior primary school. It first met on the verandah of the sisters' house. However, the ratio of girls in the junior primary was small, limiting the number able to go into the single sex class. In 1940 Effie Harkness noted that while there were 107 boys on the 'kinda' (junior primary school) roll, only fifty five girls attended. She remarked that: 'On the whole the boys seem keener to acquire knowledge than the girls do'. It was not until after the war that Solomons girls were encouraged to work as teachers in the junior school, instead of being directed to Christian domesticity.

However, the major change in the Methodist mission's education for girls came in 1955. In that year, Synod decided to open a girls' secondary boarding school at Kihili on Bougainville. This announcement followed years of discussion and consultations

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

with the women teachers. Ada Lee was appointed as the school's first head mistress. Opened in 1957, Kihili Girls' High School was unprecedented in that it drew female students from as far afield as Honiara and New Ireland. Set up in the post-war era, the curriculum was both practical and academic. The academic curriculum had been largely influenced by Ada Lee and Pamela Beaumont. The home craft curriculum was left to the discretion of newly appointed Beulah Reeves, who remained at the school for four and a half years. In 1966, Ada Lee retired and Patricia Jacobson replaced her as the headmistress. In 1969, the TPNG Government changed the school into a vocational centre.

As a result, the teaching sisters were primarily involved with young and teenage Solomons boys. Consequently there were more boys who were adequately educated to be used as teachers. In 1938, Ada Lee was transferred from Munda on New Georgia to Kihili on Bougainville. Her missionary career of twenty two years spanned from 1934 until 1966. On Bougainville her first designated task was to prepare male students planning to train as pastor/teachers for the transition from Bougainville to the college at Munda.



Sisters gather for a Retreat at Roviana 1956

The New Zealand women developed relationships with the Solomons teachers involving both friendship and discipline. While the women were held in high regard by their assistants, and the assistants were valued by the women, there were vast differences between the two cultures. Often, the Solomon Islands teachers would take

offence at the actions or the words of a teaching sister, and subsequently refuse to turn up to school. On one occasion Lina Jones recorded that: 'Unfortunately [I] had trouble with Panakera in school - he "got the huff" over nothing at all really, and departed.' Usually, notes and letters were quickly exchanged, and the dispute would then be talked over. The teacher, except in extraordinary circumstances, would then return to school. However, the reason underlying the matter was often never fully understood, and it would be put down to 'naughtiness'. Consequently, the teaching sisters noted in their diaries not only the attendance of children, but the attendance of teachers as well.

A significant change that affected the teachers in the post-war era was localisation. Thelma Duthie, who from 1952 until 1964 taught on Bougainville, was adamant that the standard of teacher training had to rise with the improving standards in education. She argued that if it did not, the situation where the village teachers knew less than the pupils would arise, and there was ample evidence that this was already the case. One teaching sister recalled instances where a village teacher insisted on sitting the standard four exam with the students, and did not do as well. Another recalled that some teachers taught the same lesson every day simply because it was one they knew. Thelma Duthie, the first fully trained teacher to be sent to Kekesu in the Teop region, was trusted with the new teacher training scheme. Later, Norma Graves replaced Duthie as head of teacher training at Kekesu. Other areas established teacher training programmes and gradually the need for the New Zealanders decreased. By 1972, Beryl Grice was the only New Zealand primary school teacher left in the BSIP.

Translation work

The Methodist mission in the Solomon Islands was unusually slow in translating scripture. The first translation of the New Testament into the Roviana language was carried out by Lina Jones, the pioneering teacher of the mission. Finishing the translation became a personal goal, compelling her to remain on the field despite the strain of constant ill-health. Her teaching colleague and close friend, Effie Harkness took over responsibility for the Munda school, enabling Jones to spend most of her time on translation work. Harkness also provided constant support by typing and proof-reading the translations. By 1949, Jones had completed the translation of the New Testament, and the revision of the Roviana dictionary. It was in the post-war era that the neglect of translation work became too obvious to ignore. The Board made an effort systematically to support translation work, instead of leaving it to the will of individual workers.

Post-war workers Pamela Beaumont and Lucy Money were given more official support than was Jones, but the task still depended upon personal commitment. Pre-war translation work in the Siwai language had been started by Harry and Beryl Voyce. However, their translations had been publicly and symbolically burnt by the Japanese during the occupation of Bougainville. Re-establishing the mission, Harry Voyce wanted the work continued and encouraged Pamela Beaumont, at that stage

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

still only a teacher, to take it up. Like Lina Jones, she had a commitment to teaching, and was unsure of her ability to do both. During study leave at the Melbourne Summer School of Linguistics, she met a missionary from Borneo who was both a teacher and translator. Inspired, Beaumont committed herself to the work of translation. Eventually, to avoid divided loyalties, she undertook deaconess training to justify concentration on translation and pastoral work.

Sister Lucy Money was appointed to Choiseul as a deaconess. Able to devote her time to translation, and having the support of linguistics courses, Money revised and completed the translation of the New Testament in Babatana. The revision of previous translations was necessary because written Solomons languages had been in their infancy in the pre-war era, and changes in orthography had been made in the post-war era. Money undertook a complete revision of the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments, eventually publishing them as one book in 1983.

Translation is not an individual task. Each transcription needs to be checked. The people best qualified for this were the Solomon Islanders themselves. Lucy Money's main translator was the early convert and mission teacher, Stephen Gadapeta. Another senior translation helper was Boaz Sirikolo. Working closely over several decades until Sirikolo's death, their friendship was firm and lasting. It was common for Solomon Islands teachers to assist in translation, and most Island teachers were men.

Pastoral

Although Lucy Money was very involved in maternity work and teaching she became increasingly involved in evangelising and pastoral work. Over a two year period in the mid-1960s Choiseul was without a minister, and the pastoral care of the circuit fell to Money. Both Lucy Money and Pamela Beaumont officiated as acting-superintendent of the Choiseul and Siwai circuits respectively. As one sister said:

You don't do just your own job... all sorts of jobs [are]... handed over to you. And whether you can do it or not you have to have a go at it...And it's amazing what you can do when you have to do it. The support role of the wives

In contrast to the sisters, the role of the wife was unstructured and remained unchanged throughout this period. The married women were to set the example of a model Christian home, provide hospitality, to run the women's groups and fill a support role for their husbands and the single sisters.

The running of a model Christian home is seen as a practical influence that the wives had. It was felt that by virtuous example the white married women would influence the Island women to be good Christian wives. This elevates the white woman and isolates her from both mission and island society, when this was not in fact the case. The influence of the wife and her home was practical and direct.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Throughout the period, Island boys (and some girls) attending the station school were taken into the mission house to be trained as 'cook boys'. The main motive for the Islanders to take up such a position was to learn the English language and Western ways as well as to contribute to the cost of their education. As a result the wives received household help. The wives were to train the 'cook boys' in much the same way that the sisters trained Solomons girls in the sisters' house.

It is worth comparing the situation of the wives with that of the sisters. One function of the sisters' house was to raise Solomons girls in a family atmosphere to be good Christian wives. However, while the sisters did call their household their family, the house was never regarded as a model Christian home. It did not fit the stereotype of a two parent household.

The wives did face certain problems in training their helpers. A number of the wives found it difficult adjusting to the idea of having household help. On one hand, a wife was supposed to be setting an example of a model Christian home and running it as every capable wife should; by herself. At the same time she had the help of the 'cook boys'. This was a problem when the wives came from a society which decreed that if a woman needed help in the house, she was a second rate wife. Further, many of the wives, if not all, came from homes where household help had never been used.

At first then, the wives could find themselves in a situation where they were at a loss to know how to treat the 'cook boys'. Nancy Carter felt awkward with the idea that she had 'servants', and determined never to ask her charges to do anything that she herself would not do. Servants are part of a class structure associated with pre-war war ideology; an ideology that Nancy Carter strongly dissociated herself from.

Other wives did not see the same ideological problems. The help was an appreciated means of freeing their time, either to do their own work, or to assist with their husbands'. Alice McDonald, a post-war wife on the island of Choiseul, freely admits that without the help from the 'cook boys' she would not have been able to manage her important role as hostess.

Hand in hand with the model Christian home was the role of hospitality. It was the job of the wives to provide food and beds for the visitors to the mission, to cater at synods and to arrange meals for the single men. Wives stationed on Munda were particularly prone to being cast in the hospitality role. Less isolated and boasting an airstrip, Munda had a steady trickle of visitors, the airstrip providing unexpected visitors in the form of stranded passengers. The biggest single event that wives had to cater for, was the annual synod. Until the post-war period, this task was to be expected of the wife on the host station. After the war, wives began to insist on help from other stations. It then became standard for two wives to cater at synod; the host wife and a visiting wife. This system shared the work more evenly, and provided an opportunity for the wives to have contact with each other.

Despite commonly being on isolated stations, in limited circumstances, the style of the traditional mission house suited the wives' role of hostess. When Alee and Sheena Watson moved from Bilua to Honiara, they shifted from a large mission station house, to a small house which made hospitality difficult. Despite the size of their new house, they continued the tradition of hospitality, even though it meant that the Watson children regularly had to give up their beds to visitors.

Although the wives were expected to have their houses constantly open a distinction must be made between pre-war and post-war attitudes. Before the war hospitality was extended towards the locals, but it commonly stopped at the door of the house. This was seen as natural, and it was often cooler on the verandah. Post-war, the houses of the missionaries were opened completely. Instead of providing the Solomon Islanders with cups of tea on the verandah they were invited, and went, inside.

The ideology behind this change can be seen in the division of World War II. Five of the pre-war wives were to return to the Solomons after World War II. New missionaries in the post-war period, while respecting the old hands saw a great difference in their attitudes. The younger generation saw World War II as a watershed with the post-war world being a much wiser one. The most powerful thing about this watershed was not that it was there, but that it was perceived to be there. The new comers saw themselves as different. Thus, in inviting the Islanders into their homes, the post-war wives were making a statement about the new era of which they saw themselves to be a part of.

The role of hospitality subtly changed after the war, and the opportunities for friendships grew. One bond that had always existed between the Solomons and New Zealand wives was that of childbirth. Childbirth created a strong bond between the European and Island mothers. Because it was unusual in Solomon Islands society for a woman to be unmarried, the wives had a definite advantage over the sisters. Further, women gained status not only through marriage, but through childbirth. Irene Cornwell recorded the acceptance she experienced as a result of giving birth to a daughter in a region that was both matrilineal and matrilocal. Common experience hastened acceptance.

At the same time, the traditional birthing practices were one aspect of Island culture the white women actively strove to change. The New Zealand attitude to childbirth, and how it should be, saw the white women reaching out to the Solomons women. Because the Solomons villages were regarded as unhygienic the European women saw deliveries in the village as dangerous. This difference of attitude is best illustrated by the words of advice on child delivery one nursing sister gave a mission wife: 'The main thing is to get them in here [to the hospital] where it's clean.'

The New Zealand mothers felt that they did have an influence in a way that the single women of the mission did not. The wives did feel that just by bearing children they

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

were able to influence the childbirth mores and reduce infant mortality. There were two ways that this influence worked. One was demonstrative, the other direct.

Two cases illustrate the influence the wives had by example. Irene Cornwell had twins in a region where all twins were killed at birth. That she kept her twins, she feels, made an impact on the people of Buka. This was demonstrated when she examined a pregnant woman and told her that she was going to have twins. Not willing to do so herself, the woman asked Marama Cornwell to tell the father. The impact Irene Cornwell feels she made was in the fact that these twins were kept and were well cared for.

Alice McDonald gave birth to only one of her children on the island of Choiseul. It was not the child but the labour itself that she saw as significant. Marama McDonald had been in labour for several hours with her third child when she decided that she would have something to eat; an insignificant action if it were not for the local tradition of labouring women refraining from food until after the birth. It was a practice that the white women regarded as dangerous, and threatening to the survival of the mother.

The second way that the wives influenced the Island women was a result of the respect given to mothers. Because the Island women knew that the wives had given birth, they were more inclined to listen to them regardless of whether they were nurses or not. The attitude that because a wife had given birth she would therefore know everything about it was prevalent.

It was not uncommon for a labouring woman to ask for a mission wife to be present at the delivery. This could often be very frustrating for the fully qualified nurse, trying to run a hospital, often on her own, to have to defer to an unqualified wife. At other times, the sisters were able to make use of the status the wives held amongst the women of the Solomons. Wives were able to convince the Island mothers to let the nurses inoculate the children. Pregnant mission wives also supported the nurses by attending prenatal classes.

In 1963, Audrey Highnam, a nursing sister, returned to New Zealand to marry the Rev. Max Bruce. Rejoining the mission in 1969 as a wife, she noticed a difference in the attitudes of the Solomons women toward her. As a wife they approached her freely about birth control. Despite the fact that she was a qualified nurse throughout her missionary career, the Solomons wives had not sought advice on contraception when she was a sister.

Further involvement that the wives had with maternity work, though not exclusive to them, was that they were often called on to act as midwives. This was especially so for wives living on isolated and understaffed stations. Beryl Voyce is perhaps the classic example. Apart from a St. John's Ambulance training course, Marama Voyce had no medical qualifications. She learnt as she went:

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

The first case I had I was terribly upset and worried about it. I'd never seen an infant born. Dr. Sayers came over to Siwai not long after that... and he gave me a lot of information and I got more from Dr. James... Common sense took me a long way.

The nursing sisters were able to help prepare the wives for their involvement in child delivery. Mrs Meriel Cropp, a trained teacher, went to the Solomons in the 1960s when her husband was appointed headmaster of Goldie College. In 1963, she sent the following letter home:

Sister Gladys [Larkin]...has often warned me that one day I'd be called on to deliver a baby. Of course I fervently hoped she would be wrong. My predecessor, Mrs. [Joyce] Hall [wife of Rev. Alan Hall, stationed to Goldie College], was a nurse and had coped admirably but teachers aren 't trained in these matters. So you can imagine how I felt when a Malaita man...arrived last Tuesday evening and requested my help for his wife....We quickly gathered up things we thought we would need, including Gladys's 'Instructions on Bush Midwifery,' took two College boys for interpreters and set of f down the narrow bush track...I was thankful that Gladys had once got me out of bed early in the morning to witness a proper delivery...

Marama Cropp's experience was typical. The wives were to share in and complement the infant and maternal work of the nurses, regardless of their medical qualifications.

The bond that was created because of childbirth was cemented as a result of the structureless job the wives had. Not tied down to an official job, they were free to visit villages as they pleased, transport and locality permitting. These visits were vital to furthering friendships. The relative freedom that the wives had to do this can be compared to the restrictions placed on the sisters.

Sister Coralie Murray fell into conflict with one doctor in the early 1930s. He objected to her habit of going down to the village, sitting outside the houses, and eating with the villagers. The doctor felt that the medical missionaries should not strike up such personal relationships with the locals. The wives were free of such restrictions because they did not exist in a formal structure. Those wives who did spend time in the villages claim that it was the most important thing that they could have done.

Bonds of friendship between the New Zealand and the Solomons women were extended through the leading role that the white wives played in the women's groups. Although the men did the formal evangelising it was through these women's groups that the New Zealand wives had a major input in the spiritual side of the mission. The women's groups such as the sewing circles were not only practical times of teaching skills, they provided informal opportunities to evangelise. The significance of this was missed by Alan Tippett in his study of Christianity in the Solomon Islands, especially in relation to the mission's reaction to the Eto Movement.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Silas Eto was the prophet who led the breakaway messianic movement, that took his name and later established itself as the Christian Fellowship Church. Tippett's Solomon Islands Christianity analyses the effects that the movement had on the Methodist Church and the enormous inroads it made, especially on the island of New Georgia; the island where Munda, the head station, was situated. Tippett looks to the sermons and letters of the male missionaries for his sources. In doing so, he has missed one way in which the Methodist Church fought back at the movement; through the women.

As a direct result of the confusion about the messianic movement, the white wives on Munda organised the Solomons women into the Methodist Women's Fellowship. It was a women's group which gained the support of the South Pacific Commission. This movement spread throughout the mission stations and was operating one year before the MWF began in New Zealand. However, the Choiseul chapter ran into early opposition. The Choiseul women were surprised to find their husbands steadfastly opposed to the idea. It was only their own determination, and the support of the headman which saw the venture go ahead. It is a situation where the white women responded to advances made by the Melanesian women.

The importance which the Solomons women placed on the MWF is best illustrated in their request for a full-time MWF worker. In the early 1960s, Sister Lesley Bowen was elected to spend three years travelling throughout the Solomons district, living in the villages, and working amongst the women. Travelling with two Solomon Islands deaconesses, her work was village based, and aimed at teaching the women to set up and run their own fellowship groups.

The MWF, apart from providing fellowship and unity, also taught the Island women new types of leadership skills. The roles of president, treasurer and secretary were unknown in Solomon Islands society. The emphasis on leadership skills goes further than the ability to be a good committee member. The skills learnt carried through to both church and community leadership.

It is worth noting that of the white women who have re-visited the Solomons, all have observed that it is the women who now occupy the leadership roles in the ^ church. Irene Cornwell noted it on her return to Buka in 1987:

And to find out what had happened since we left [in 1964] and the power the women have now in our particular area [Buka] is just exciting....The women have taken for themselves the education and their own natural ability and are using it for their own family and their own furtherance in society and their own skills - and using it very wisely.

The women have apparently, 'left the men standing'.

The wives contributed to evangelisation in yet another way. The friendships that the New Zealand women made with the Solomons women, helped them in their

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

understanding of the language and culture of that locality. This equipped the New Zealand women with a useful skill; the ability to translate written texts. Translation necessitated close working relationships with the Solomon Islanders.

As a group, the wives specialised in translating hymns and Bible verses. Constance Bensley, nee Olds, translated and published a collection of children's hymns as well as a children's version of Pilgrim's Progress. Although the wives were not the only translation workers, they are the workers who have received the least recognition for it. In the official minutes of the Overseas Mission Board, credit for translating the New Testament into the Petats language is first given to Gordon Cornwell. It was Irene Cornwell who did the translating over a period of fifteen years. Gordon Cornwell could not have completed the translation. He was not fluent in the Petats language.

It was a result of the living conditions that saw Gordon and Irene Cornwell develop different linguistic skills. Because Irene was always on the station, she became fluent in the Petats language, out of necessity. Gordon who travelled a lot, was familiar with several, but never completely mastered even one of them.

The wives also played a vital support role for both their husbands and the sisters. Beryl Voyce was the first white woman to work on the Methodist mission in the Siwai region. While she is traditionally credited with carrying out extensive work amongst the women and children, this did not begin until after the mission had been established. In the pioneering era, her work 'was with everyone'. Assisting her husband in the pioneering work, she travelled miles on foot with him between the inland and mountain villages sleeping in the men's meeting houses. In the absence of any sisters, she began much of the educational and medical work.

It is in the role of support that the New Zealand wives entered into and operated within the official structures of the mission; the hospitals, schools, and boarding schools. In 1934, Amy Leadley began a crucial role in maintaining the medical services at Munda. As a consequence of the Depression, there were no nurses stationed on the mission in the BSIP, and the nearest doctor (who was not mission staff) was over one hundred miles away. Consequently, Marama Leadley, both a qualified nurse and a qualified chemist, took responsibility for the hospital. It was not until another nurse was stationed at Munda to share the load, that Amy Leadley had the time to begin the sewing classes and women's lotu that were the trademark of wives.

Irene Cornwell, a post-war wife, found she was often doing her own work, the sisters' work and the work of her husband. When the Cornwells were stationed to Buka the nursing sister was transferred away; there was a staff shortage and Irene Cornwell was a fully qualified nurse. Ten days later, Gordon Cornwell was called away on a trip lasting several weeks leaving her in charge. She ran the school, the boarding school and the hospital, which was full due to a sudden pneumonia epidemic amongst

children. All three institutions were usually the domain of the sisters. During this time Irene also ran the mission plantation which was normally the responsibility of the men.

Gordon Cornwell was to be away from the station for nine months out of the year. This situation was not unusual or unique to the Cornwells. It was common for the wives to have to be able to think their husbands' thoughts, as they were often called on to do his job.

Within the support role the wives entered into the official structures of the mission. But as soon as the 'real' missionaries came back, they had to step right back out again and acknowledge that the work they had done was not their own. It was a step that was frustrating and indicative of the lack of recognition the wives received, and if the step was not taken quickly enough, the wives could often be accused of 'interfering'.

The wives who were to experience the most disappointment in their missionary careers were those who were stationed to Munda during the 1960s. By the 1960s, the Methodist mission to the Solomon Islands was well established. Munda was the head station and the bureaucratic centre of the mission. The running of the hospital and school was ordered and controlled. Wives who went to the islands with every intention of using their skills within the mission, were told that their presence was not required, or even wanted. This was a frustration that jaded their missionary experience. As one wife recalled:

I left here [New Zealand] as a Registered Nurse, I'd worked for years to go to Helena Goldie hospital... but when I got there, there was no job, in fact I was not allowed to work, I was a 'wife' whatever that was supposed to mean.

The extent to which a wife would experience this restrictive policy was dependent upon three factors. First, the time period. It happened in the 1960s. Secondly, the station. The incidence of wives being excluded from working was more likely to happen on a station with a large population of expatriates, in particular Munda. The European population on the other stations was slight in comparison. In the early years, this was due to staff shortages. In the later years there was the move towards localisation; it was a trend which saw Solomon Islanders appointed to teaching, nursing and ministering roles. The Europeans concentrated on administration. Munda was very much the bureaucratic nerve centre.

The third factor is the status of the husband. The lowest common denominator in these cases is the fact of the husband being a lay missionary; working as either accountants, managers, engineers or carpenters. The following quotation demonstrates the differences in stations and the status of the husband.

[There were] more married staff [at Munda than on Bougainville]. So there [were not] the opportunities that I [Nancy Carter] had had on Bougainville for the ...other wives - not to the same extent. ...I had had freedom to develop in my

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

own missionary line, as well as ... being a wife. The wives down at Munda at that time; the wife of the business man, and the wife of the engineer didn't have the same opportunity. And I think I tried very carefully to make sure that they...were able to use the gifts that they had so that we could work as a team.

However, Nancy Carter's efforts to include the women were not enough. The affected women felt bitter about the 'policy' towards the wives. It was not until 1971, that the United Church issued an official policy on the role of the wives of staff. Stating that the church had 'no objection in principle' to the wives of church employees working, it was pointed out that:

...some Church members look to their Church Workers' wives as helpers in Women s Work in the Church and expect them to be an example in their family life...Church members should remember [this]...

The wife was regarded as a role model by the people, and all couples were to bear that in mind.

The limitations that were placed on the wives go some way towards explaining the very central role that they played in the women's groups. It was in an avenue that they would never have to step out of to defer to another worker.

Summary

The work performed by the women was extensive and diverse exceeding the limits of their training and qualifications. The sisters set up and ran the institutions. The married women worked both in their own fields and as support for the official workers. Concentrating their efforts largely on the Solomons women and children, they also worked closely with Solomon Islands men. The ability effectively to carry out their work depended upon the acceptance of the Solomon Islanders. This in turn depended upon the amount of time spent, and what the missionary had done, on the field, as well as her marital status. Consequently, while the sisters were the official missionaries, the wives were missionaries in all but name.



Sister Effie with her class

5: THE RETURN HOME

'...people who became my people and the land my adopted land...'

- Lesley Bowen, 1991

'When?' and 'why?' missionaries leave the field are important questions, and they are two that are commonly asked. Also significant is the often neglected query: 'What happened to them afterwards?'. That question not only takes the group biography to its natural end, it also concerns the effect that missionary work had on the missionaries.

Length of service

The largest group of women left the Solomons field after a period of five years or less. Those who remained for more than ten years comprise just one quarter of the total figure. Only nine women served for longer than fifteen years, five of them remaining for over twenty years, (see appendix 1.)

While there is a general pattern of short-term service throughout the period, there are different trends before and after World War II. In the post-war era, the number of women remaining on the field for more than ten years decreased proportionally in comparison with the pre-war era. There was a slight contradiction to this trend: in the post-war era the number of women serving for the short period of five years or less dropped proportionally in comparison to the pre-war. Further, in the post-war period, the proportion serving from six to ten years was almost double that in the pre-war period, (see appendix 1.)

Termination of Service

(a) Death

Unlike in certain other missionary operations in the Pacific, death does not here rank highly as a reason for termination of service. For the women of the Solomons mission, only two were prevented from continuing their missionary work due to premature death. However, the two cases were not similar; both women completed vastly different terms of service.

Gladys and Frank Chivers left New Zealand in 1922 to work as a lay missionary couple at Munda. Despite their good rapport with most mission staff, they became dissatisfied. Frank Chivers did not get on well with John Goldie and Gladys Chivers' health suffered in the malarial climate. Although they were disillusioned with the Solomons, they were not disillusioned with missionary service and applied to be transferred to the Lord Howe group. They were turned down and told to remain at Munda. One year later, Frank Chivers notified the Board of his intention to resign citing 'health reasons'. The couple were looking forward to returning to New Zealand. But, in 1927, just months before they were due to leave the Solomons, Gladys became ill with blackwater fever, and died three days later. Buried at the mission graveyard at

Haevo, she was the first worker to die on the field since the mission was founded in 1902.

The circumstances of Sister Elizabeth Common's death in 1946 are different from those of Gladys Olivers'. Elizabeth Common began her missionary career at Munda in 1924. In 1928, she was transferred to Buka where she remained until 1942. At the beginning of that year, she was evacuated to New Zealand under war-time conditions by the Australian Government. In 1946, she prepared to return to the Solomons to assist with the rehabilitation of the mission. Shortly before she was due to return, Common became ill and died unexpectedly. She was fifty six years old. Although she did not die on the field, Elizabeth Common's commitment to the Solomons mission was life-long; she had worked on the field for nineteen years, and left her estate to the medical mission on Buka.

(b) Retrenchment

The retrenchment of staff between the years 1930 and 1934 was another reason for unwilling and unplanned termination of service. The financial position of the Board forced the withdrawal of six sisters, two ministers and two doctors. Although retrenchment was reluctant on the part of the Board, in reality it affected only a few of the women; five of the withdrawn sisters had been planning to leave the field for reasons of their own. In 1930, Vivian Adkin, a nurse, left the field of her own accord after a prolonged dispute with Allan Cropp. She had not completed a full term, and she was not replaced; the Board retrenched the position. In the same year Coralie Murray, also a nurse, left Sasamuqa where she had been stationed for two and a half years, to return to New Zealand and care for her mother. At the end of 1931, a third nurse, Muriel Stewart, returned to New Zealand on furlough. She was unable to go back to the Solomons in 1932, due to an unfavourable medical certificate. Of the two other sisters, one was ill, and the other was disillusioned with the mission. The latter admitted that retrenchment was only part of the reason for quitting the field.

In reality Grace McDonald is the only sister whose withdrawal from the field can be attributed solely to retrenchment. She was withdrawn in the face of financial hardship because she had no nursing or teaching qualifications. She was qualified as a deaconess only. (The MWMU and the Mission Board both vetoed Goldie's plans to retrench Elizabeth Common from Buka, because she was a trained Plunket nurse.) Forced to retire from the field in 1934, McDonald returned to Ireland, and completed her general nursing training. In 1939, the financial position of the Mission Board had recovered sufficiently for McDonald to be re-appointed. Her status changed; she was re-employed as a nursing sister, not a deaconess. In essence, the Mission Board had implemented a 'sinking lid' policy in regard to the employment of sisters; the positions were retrenched, not the individual women.

Another woman who was reluctantly affected by the retrenching was Florrie James. Dr. Clifford and Florrie James began their missionary careers on Choiseul in 1929 and

were retrenched from the western Solomons in 1932. Intent on continuing in overseas mission work, the couple offered and were accepted to serve in New Britain, and later with the Anglican mission on Malaita, in the eastern Solomons. They eventually returned to New Zealand in 1938, where Florrie James continued as home-maker and mother.

(c) Health

Ill-health was one reason prominently cited for leaving the field. Malaria took its toll on the workers making no distinction between the enthusiastic and the unenthusiastic, the married and the single, or the 'old hands' and the 'new chums'.

Jean and Chris Palmer, a lay missionary couple, were amongst the missionaries faced with the task of rebuilding the mission after World War II. In 1947, they were appointed to Koau on Bougainville. Half-way through their third year, Chris suffered, a serious attack of poliomyelitis which forced the Palmers to quit the field.

Resignation under such circumstances was stressful. The Rev. Peter and Jeanette Barker were stationed at Kekesu early in 1963. Once on Bougainville, Peter Barker's health deteriorated rapidly. The couple 'prayerfully considered' their situation, and withdrew from the field five and a half months after arriving. Despite the ill health which led to the resignation, Peter Barker confessed to the General Secretary: 'Quite honestly, Jeanette and I feel we have failed miserably...'

Ill health was also a discreet way of removing an 'unsuccessful' missionary from the field. The Mission Board minutes merely note that the missionary withdrew for 'health reasons', and courteously thank her for her service. Ada Saunders is a case in point. Appointed to Munda in 1923, Saunders was not suited to mission life, and this evidenced itself in her relationships with her co-workers as well as her health.

Apparently suffering from a bad case of black water fever, Saunders was escorted to Sydney by Lilian Berry. The seriousness of her ill health was later doubted by those on the field, following her rather 'miraculous' recovery. While the Board minutes stated that Saunders left the field for health reasons, correspondence reveals that it was a polite way of terminating her service.

The Adkin-Cropp dispute of 1930 is a variation on this theme. Vivian Adkin and Allan Cropp were both stationed at Buka and both had eccentric personalities. A personality conflict ensued, rapidly escalating into dramatic confrontation over the proper department of missionaries and their work. Adkin became incensed when Cropp suggested that she resign from the mission and, to save face, discreetly cite 'health reasons'. Adkin felt that Cropp had been unreasonable both in his attitude to her, and in his 'interference' with her work. She refused as she felt that the problem was with Cropp. Eventually, she left the station, and took refuge at a nearby plantation owned by Gordon Thomas. The Board was kept informed of the developments by both Cropp and Adkin. However, Adkin lost all credibility in the eyes of the Board

when she involved local residents in the dispute. Gordon Thomas wrote to the General Secretary putting forward what he claimed was the view of the local white settlers. Adkin's complaints against Cropp were not acknowledged. The official verdict was that she left her station without warning or notification. This removed any claim from the Board that Adkin had on the Retiring Allowance.

(d) Family obligations

Family obligations are on a par with ill health as a reason for quitting the field. Like ill-health, the obligations affected the women at random, and made no distinction between the long-term and short-term workers. In the case of the single women, much of the pressure to return and assist family in New Zealand came from the sister herself. Single women with no conflicting family obligations saw themselves as the most appropriate person to take responsibility for dependent family members.

In 1955, Effie Harkness returned to New Zealand on furlough. En route, she was informed that her mother had recently suffered a stroke and when she arrived home Harkness realised that her help was needed there. Over the twenty year period that she had worked on the mission field, and especially as her parents got older, family responsibilities had been shouldered by her sister Edna Hemmings. However, Effie Harkness was reluctant to hand her notice in while she was on furlough. She had not been expecting to leave the field permanently, and wanted to prepare the school at Munda for a new teacher to replace her. For this reason, she gave the Board twelve months notice, although a shortage of staff delayed her retirement for a further three months.

The family obligations of the wives were different. Because they had families of their own in the Solomon Islands, their assistance to care for relatives was not requested as often as was the sisters'. However, the health and education of mission children and the stress of raising growing families and older children prompted many couples to consider quitting the field.

After Mavis Luxton left the field with her children during her fifth pregnancy in 1948, she did not return. In New Zealand she gave birth to twins and a year later had a further child. Her first daughter had died in the Solomons in 1946, and because of the difficulties of raising a large family on the field, which by 1949 numbered six, she was reluctant to return to the Solomons. In 1949, the Luxtons officially withdrew from the Solomon Islands, and began their ministry in New Zealand.

The family obligations of the wives unlike those of the sisters tended to affect them at a specific time; when their children began to enter their teens. Irene and Gordon Cornwell started seriously to consider returning to New Zealand when their four children neared high school age. Irene had been able to supervise correspondence lessons at the primary level but she did not feel competent to teach lessons at a secondary level. This was a problem that was faced by all parents with school age

children. Although boarding school was an option that was commonly chosen, the prolonged separation and the expense made it undesirable as a permanent solution.

(e) Age

The timing of the women's resignations was affected by their ages. In 1969, Gladys Larkin resigned from her position of nursing sister after nine years. At forty, she felt it prudent to return to New Zealand and re-establish herself both professionally and financially. She was aware that the longer she waited before she returned the longer she would remain out of touch with changing hospital methods in New Zealand. Three years later, Beryl Grice left for similar reasons. She was conscious that readjustment to New Zealand would be harder the longer she stayed away. Also influencing her decision was her awareness of the difference between what she taught in the class room and what the Solomon Islands children needed to be taught for living in villages.

When Gladys Larkin and Beryl Grice handed in their resignations, they were not pressed to remain in the way that earlier missionaries had been. Nor did either woman have any qualms about leaving. There was no reason for them to stay. Localisation had ensured that the women could leave without their absence seriously depleting staff numbers. They were replaced by Solomon Islanders.

(f) Matrimony

At least seven sisters permanently left the mission field for matrimonial reasons during the period. Three of these women had met their husbands on the field. Jean Dalziel was appointed to Bilua as a deaconess in 1925. On the field, she met Francis Butler, and in 1930 returned to New Zealand to be married. Ruth Grant, a teaching sister, was stationed at Munda from 1931 until 1934. While on the field, she met fellow missionary, the Rev. Frank Hayman. The couple married, but did not return to the field. A third woman, Beverly Withers, had worked as a nurse both in the BSIP and the TPNG during the 1960s. While living on Bougainville, she met a local plantation owner, Peter du Cloux. They were married in 1968.

Another woman who resigned for matrimonial reasons was Joy Whitehouse. Whitehouse nursed in the Solomons for two terms; one immediately before World War II, and another immediately after the war. She had originally tabled her resignation in 1941 after a dispute with the mission doctor, but later withdrew it 'for the sake of the people'. In 1947, two years into her second term, she again forwarded her resignation to the Board, and left the field in 1948 to marry.

The case of Rewa Williamson is slightly different. Williamson was not engaged when she left the field. She wanted to marry and have a family, but prospects on the mission field were limited. She aptly and perceptively described the field as an artificial situation where the number of single women greatly exceeded the number of single men. To be able to marry, she felt that she had to leave the field, and return to New Zealand. Rewa Williamson left in 1960 and married Gordon Miller in 1966.

(g) Committed to one term only

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were several cases of workers who went to the field intent on completing only one term. In 1961, Pat Hulks went to Buka planning to remain for the mandatory three years. However, at the end of her first term she realised the extent of 'on-the-job-training' that a missionary had in the initial years. She decided that it would be a waste to leave with the knowledge she had gained, requiring a new person to start from scratch. Consequently, Hulks returned for a second term. However, by the end of her seventh year, she began to miss New Zealand (cricket and the theatre in particular) and resigned in 1968.

(h) Retirement

Out of the 106 women who served on the field, a few continued their service until they reached retirement age. Lina Jones taught in the Solomons from 1924 until 1949, absent only during the war. She retired at the age of fifty nine. Beryl and Harry Voyce left the mission field in 1958, to retire to New Zealand. They had lived on Bougainville from 1926, and except for the war years, had worked with the mission until 1958. In that year, the Rev. Voyce reached retirement age, and the couple returned to New Zealand where their children had preceded them.

Likewise, Lucy Money completed her working life in the Solomons. Money, who first went to the Islands in 1947, did not retire from mission work until 1987. When she did, she did not return to New Zealand. Instead, she remained living in Choiseul as a volunteer helper for the mission. Lucy Money was surprised to receive an MBE in 1964 for her work on the mission. She did not think that she had sacrificed as much as was attributed to her: she was working in a job she loved amongst people she loved.

Continuation of overseas service

Merle Farland became the best known of the missionary women despite spending only five years on the field. There are two reasons for this. First, she singly continued the mission's medical work (albeit in a limited capacity) for nine months during World War II, receiving an MBE for her actions. Despite risking her life to carry on with the medical work, she did not return to the Solomon Islands after the war, although she later confessed a desire to do so. The second reason for her notability was that after furthering her medical qualifications, she continued to work in a mission capacity. For twenty five years Farland worked for the World Health Organisation, specialising in infant and maternal health. Her career took her to such countries as Afghanistan, Uganda and Ghana, as well as Bangladesh, Taiwan and numerous South Pacific islands, including a brief visit to the Solomons in 1960. Farland retired to New Zealand in 1967.

Unlike Merle Farland, Dr Allen and Elizabeth Rutter did return to the Solomons after World War II. Dr Rutter was seconded to the government as the medical superintendent, and with his wife, was based at Honiara. Their connection with the

mission continued. Elizabeth Rutter provided hospitality to missionaries travelling through there on their way to or from the field.

Eight women are known to have continued their overseas service on other mission fields, several in the Pacific area. Phyllis Rudolph taught on the Methodist field from 1957 until her marriage to Colin Albert in 1960. Then she worked as a wife, first on the Duke of York Islands in Papua New Guinea and then in New Britain. In • 1968, she and her husband began long-term work amongst Aborigines in the Northern Territory.

Others continued their careers for relatively short terms. Kathleen Shaw initially returned to New Zealand and in the early 1970s began a two year course at the New Life Bible College. In 1975, nine years after leaving Bougainville, Shaw joined the Gospel Lighthouse Bible Institute in the Philippines. She occupied a lecturing position, as well as the usual missionary role, and remained with the American-run mission until 1977 when she returned to New Zealand.

Re-adjusting to New Zealand

The majority of the women missionaries who left the field returned to their own culture in New Zealand. However, in the interim both the missionaries and New Zealand had undergone changes independently of each other. When the women came home on furlough they caught glimpses of the changing life-style in New Zealand but permanent adjustments did not have to be made. They were 'home' only temporarily. For part of their six months furlough, they were missionaries on holiday. For the other part, they were missionaries on deputation. On furlough they never left their missionary roles. However, when they returned to New Zealand permanently they were expected to settle back into 'New Zealand life'. They were no longer missionaries; they were ex-missionaries. Naturally, there were some problems.

Many returned from the Solomons anticipating a new beginning, and it was that anticipation that made the initial period so difficult. While loneliness had been a common factor on the mission field, it was also a common part of the re-adjustment process in New Zealand. Nancy Carter, who first went to the field as a newly-wed in 1949, described the adjustment she had to make to New Zealand on her return in 1965:

It was very very hard... for the first time in my married life I was on my own during the day. George went off to the office, the children went off to school, and I was in a house in suburbia, where nobody cared whether you lived or died...And it got so desperate that I used to go out...and garden so I could talk to people as they went past in the street...

After fifteen years of living on a mission station Beryl Grice also found the transition from the Solomons to New Zealand very difficult. Grice associated the loneliness she

experienced returning in 1972 with one obvious difference between the two countries. That is, living in a city:

...you are a big frog in a little pool out there [in the Solomons] and every day you are...greeted by your name..."Where are you going Sister Beryl?" Hello Sister Beryl," "Where are you going?", "What are you doings When you come back, especially if you come back to a city as I came back to Auckland, you are immediately depersonalised. Nobody smiles at you in the street and greets you...or you don't hear your name. Thats one thing that I found hardest of all, was not to be recognised, smiled at and spoken to by name...

In an effort to recapture the closeness of living on a mission station Beryl Grice applied for a job in a two teacher school in the Bay of Islands. Her attempt to replace the community that she had lived in in the Solomons with a small and isolated community in New Zealand was idealistic, and she discovered, unrealistic. She was even more lonely there than she had been in Auckland. It was not a matter of living in a city as opposed to the country. She was living in a different culture.

'Materialism' is the catch phrase ex-missionaries use to describe one of the strongest impressions they encountered on their return to New Zealand. The number of shops, the range of goods on sale, and the number of people buying them repelled returning missionaries from what seemed a very superficial society. Effie Harkness found this in 1957:

I went to the Solomons [in 1937], people hadn't talked very much...about cultural shock - but I didn't have any. I think that was probably because I was brought up in my first years in Tonga, and I got used to the Pacific atmosphere and the style of life - it was quite different in the Solomons [from Tonga] but [it was] Pacific... When I came back to New Zealand I got a very bad case of 'cultural shock' ..I had lived in a place where values were so different (and) by the time I came back [to New Zealand] in fifty seven, money was becoming more and more the main thing in life....you never thought a great deal about others - it wasn 't as bad as it is now - but it was here, much more than [I] ever met in the Solomons....and after being years trying to help these Island people you feel a hypocrite.

The reasons for the potent sense of materialism go beyond the transition from an 'unmaterialistic' and impoverished society to a 'materialistic' and relatively wealthy society. Day to day living on a mission station did not involve handling money. The Mission Board paid all the stipends into personal bank accounts at the Pitt Street branch of the Bank of New South Wales. Bills and grocery orders were charged against their accounts. If the women needed to travel from the station they took a canoe, or walked, or used a mission vessel, none of which involved paying a fare. Therefore, missionaries were isolated from personal daily financial transactions. They never carried change and they never needed to.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

In New Zealand, the women did have to concern themselves with buying milk daily, going to the supermarket, and paying power and telephone bills; the 'ordinary' details that they had not previously been concerned with. Consequently, the importance of money in New Zealand society was more obvious. Beryl Grice recalled:

...everyone seemed so preoccupied with money and material things, and that strikes you and you think, I'm never going to be like that, and then you find with horror about two or three years later that you're as bad as the rest of them...

Pamela Beaumont returned to New Zealand in 1975, twenty four years after she had first left. On her return, Beaumont had difficulty reconciling the New Zealand she found with the life-style she had lived in Bougainville. (Deeply involved in pastoral work on Bougainville she had had the opportunity to concentrate on the spiritual as well as the practical.) Five months after returning to New Zealand, Beaumont wrote:

I am enjoying being back with my family...but I understand now that it is very much harder to walk closely with Jesus here....you have to battle with a hundred and one attention grabbers that don't want you to have your own thoughts. It's like being in a spin drier!...

Living in another culture, meant living in another language. The impact this left on the missionaries can be gauged by the case of Gladys Chivers (the first missionary to die on the field). After five years in the Solomons, Chivers was competent in speaking the Roviana language. In 1927, the last three days of her life were spent in a state of semi-consciousness during which she responded to Roviana better than she did to English.

For several who returned to New Zealand, the adjustment after years of speaking a Solomon Islands language caused both amusement and sadness. Davinia Taylor, nee Clark, recalled one situation she found herself in when she returned during 1967:

I can remember going into a shop and going to ask for something and not being able to articulate [what it was I wanted] and having to back off and think...in English rather than Pijin...I've heard stories of the older missionaries saying the Lord's prayer and starting in English and changing mid stream - without knowing they had changed - into one of the Island languages.

Gladys Larkin returned to New Zealand in 1969. Aware of the potential problems of re-settling she had tactically avoided employment which involved shift work. Consequently, she did not immediately return to the nursing profession.

Obtaining a position as a pharmacy assistant, her free time coincided with the 'normal' socialising hours. It was not loneliness or 'materialism' which affected Larkin; it was the language. In 1991 she wrote: 'I feel sad that I have not had any need of the Roviana language now for about twenty years and it is slipping away from me.'

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

On returning to New Zealand, the women not only lost the opportunity to speak the Island language, they also lost the opportunity to speak about their missionary experiences. Beryl Grice recalled:

...you find nobody is interested; nobody knows much about the Solomons and cares less. And you can't talk and share with people because they're not really very interested, not really-[only] superficially or for a short time. And so you just have to bottle it up all inside.

Some women endured a self censorship because their experiences of mission f in the Solomons were unpleasant. Their recollections are unlike any of the stories told in nostalgic gatherings. Loneliness, ill health, mission life, and the jading 'policy' towards wives, all had an impact that was not always acknowledged; by the affected women or by those around them. Some kept their experiences to themselves because they were unwilling to offend or upset others in the church by speaking openly.



Nancy Carter with members of the Women's Fellowship at Munda

For others it was a case of suppressing their feelings in an attempt to forget their missionary careers. Many unhappy wives in particular remained quiet, keeping their feelings entirely to themselves. The stress of the mission field, unplanned pregnancies, their own unhappiness and their reticence to talk openly, all contributed to a potent recipe of disaster. One post-war wife who was dissatisfied with the policy of wives not working never told anyone of her unhappiness. However, once in New Zealand on furlough, she refused to return to the Islands. Her case was not uncommon.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Illness took a harsh toll on the physical and mental health of certain women, and the most extreme cases ended up in hospitals. May Bartle served as a nursing sister on Bilua from 1932 until she was retrenched in 1934. Even after her return to New Zealand, Bartle was plagued with health problems that were attributed to recurring malaria. These continued throughout her life, necessitating periods in a psychiatric institution.

Wives who returned to New Zealand were faced with the unexpected role of helping their whole family to re-adjust. The effect on the children was often underestimated. Commonly they had never been in a formal classroom situation, having studied by correspondence lessons. It was not only the difference in the number of pupils in the class and at the school, but also the need to work at the pace of the class, instead of their own. The position many of the mission children were in was explained by Nancy Carter, speaking of her elder daughter:

...Judith was more Melanesian than she was New Zealand. She thought in Roviana. She was fair and people didn't recognise her for the stranger that she was. If she'd spoken with an accent...they would have...been more understanding.

Nancy Cochrane spent two years in the Solomons, and returned home in 1971. She recalled with humour the adjustments that both she and her children had to make. She 'suggested' to her daughters: '...not to inspect friends' hair for nits, and (that it was) more acceptable in New Zealand to eat with [a] knife and fork, and [to] keep one's clothes on.'

When Alice McDonald returned in 1962, she discovered an unexpected similarity between her own childhood and that of her three sons. Alice McDonald came from a family of twelve and could recall only two occasions in her lifetime when her parents and her siblings were all present under one roof. The situation occurred again with her own sons:

I found it very difficult because we had [had] David and Barry (the two younger boys) with us Ion Choiseul], and the oldest boy, Graeme, had been at Wesley College [in New Zealand]... [When we got back to New Zealand] we all had to get together under the one roof and it wasn't very easy for the boys to settle down and get to know one another.

Professions

With the re-adjustment to New Zealand came the need to re-establish a career. Several women had the opportunity to work for the New Zealand church as deaconesses, ministers and ministers' wives.

When a deaconess resigned from the overseas field, she did not automatically resign from the Deaconess Order. However, very few returned to work as deaconesses in the New Zealand church. The majority had trained as a prerequisite for the overseas

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

mission and had little interest in being employed on the home field. One exception to this was Sister Lily White, a deaconess and trained nurse. White worked on two overseas fields: in Fiji from 1919 until 1921, and in the Solomons from 1925 until 1928. On both occasions she resigned for health reasons, and returned to deaconess work for short periods in New Zealand. By the early 1930s she had resumed her nursing career, first in the Chatham Islands and then in New Zealand.

Norma Graves, also a deaconess, returned to work for the New Zealand church, but in a different capacity. Graves went to the western Solomons as a teaching sister in 1954. In the 1960s, she was transferred to the New Guinea Islands, and then to Rarongo Theological College where she was Dean of Women. While overseas, Graves began and completed her deaconess training by correspondence. When she returned to New Zealand in 1972, she worked as a deaconess for a short time only. In 1974 she was ordained as a presbyter, and in 1976 entered St. John's Theological College to train for the ministry. The Rev. Norma Graves died in 1989.

Pat Jacobson also entered the ministry after returning to New Zealand. Jacobson had begun her missionary career in 1962, and was appointed as a teacher to Kihili Girls' School. In 1966 she replaced Ada Lee as headmistress. Returning to New Zealand in 1971, she enrolled at St. John's Theological College. Living in a community situation, Jacobson was initially shielded from many of the difficulties associated with re-adjustment. The loneliness and disorientation affected her after she left the college and took up her first appointment.

Women who had served as ministers' wives in the Solomons returned to what was termed 'parsonage survival'. For some, like Constance Bensley, this role in New Zealand was a new experience. She met and married her husband in the Solomons, and the couple spent the first twelve years of their marriage there. When they returned to New Zealand in 1934 she had to adapt to a new style of ministry. Even for those with more New Zealand experience than Constance Bensley the re-adjustment was difficult. In 1963 Alice McDonald returned to a familiar way of life. She had worked as a minister's wife in New Zealand before proceeding to the Solomons. In providing a model Christian home in the Solomons it was acceptable for a wife to have household help. However, McDonald returned to a society that frowned upon this. She was expected to set an example by herself.

The adjustment that Audrey Bruce, nee Highnam, had to make was eased by the Onehunga church that she and her husband were first appointed to. The parish was familiar with helping ex-missionaries settle in; Phil and Davinia Taylor had ministered in the same church on their return. As well, the parish had a strong Pacific identity, containing a large Tongan population.

Nursing sisters Lilian Berry and Merle Carter both married ministers on their return to New Zealand. Berry left the Solomons in 1934 and in 1935 married Robert Eaton, a builder, but was widowed in 1947. After her second marriage to the Rev.A.G.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Woodnutt in 1952 she ministered with him for five years before retiring to New Plymouth. Merle Carter left the field in 1960, and nursed full-time until 1964. In that year she married the Rev. Reginald Grice, the father of her missionary colleagues, Audrey and Beryl Grice.

The time spent in the Solomon Islands influenced several women when they re-entered the New Zealand work force. While many did return to their original professions, several exhibited a reluctance to do so immediately. Ada Lee retired from the mission field in 1966, thirty two years after she first began. Because she had been out of touch with the New Zealand education system for so long, and books and methods had changed, she was reticent to immediately resume her teaching career. Before returning to teaching she worked as a sub-matron of Deaconess House in Christchurch.

Other women expanded and consolidated their careers. Audrey Grice, a teaching sister, left the Solomons in 1962. After returning to New Zealand, she graduated from Massey University with a Bachelor of Education, and later made use of a skill she had learnt during her eight years in the Solomons; she taught English as a second language. Her first New Zealand experience was home-tutoring Campuchean refugees. Later she taught an 'English For New Settlers' course at a Palmerston North community college.

Returning to New Zealand in 1968, Pat Hulks had no desire to resume her teaching career. Wishing to continue her work with children, she found a position as a Child Welfare officer with the Department of Social Welfare. Hulks became cynical about this work feeling that her main function was to help people 'stagger from one crisis to the next'. However, it was through her welfare work that she became interested in teaching the deaf, and trained accordingly. Hulks then returned to teaching.

A few women opted for a change of profession. Ann and Bob Baker had been disillusioned by mission life. Because Bob had worked in the office at Munda, the couple had been tied to the station more so than other missionaries. For the Bakers, this magnified the problems of a station-based mission. Back in New Zealand, Ann initially returned to teaching. However, she was disoriented by what was later termed 'culture shock'. It took her some time to determine the direction of her life. Ann Baker was in her forties when she made a permanent career change, and trained as a social worker.

The contact maintained

(a) The mission

Despite leaving the Islands, and re-establishing themselves in New Zealand, the women did not lose all contact with the Solomon Islands or the Methodist mission. A number returned to the Solomons after the close of the period for further service. Commonly it was lay people who returned. After the independence of the United

Church, European clergy were no longer needed. However, the developing church still required material and specialist aid. Responding to this need at least four couples returned to work in the Solomons in the 1970s and 1980s.

Other women retained their contact with the Solomons mission, by supporting it from New Zealand. Retired missionaries Edna White, Lina Jones and Effie Harkness, all expanded their missionary careers by serving on the New Zealand Mission Board. White and Jones both served for thirteen years. All three are unusual amongst the women. It was normally the men who retained contact in this way. While on the Board, Jones took on extra responsibilities. She became the assistant editor of the missionary magazine, the Lotu. Eventually she was given the title Manager of Publications.

In turn, Edna White and Effie Harkness both assumed the responsibility of being the Mission Box Organiser. When the women in the Solomons needed extra equipment that was not available through the general finances, they corresponded with White, and later Harkness, to purchase particular items from funds provided by the MWMU. The letter writing that the two women undertook, also served to provide the missionaries on the field with another confidant who understood the problems they faced.

Ruth Alley also continued her support of the Solomons mission despite the death of her husband on board the Japanese vessel *Montevideo Maru* in 1942. When she eventually re-married, it was again to a Methodist minister, the Rev. C.E. Dickens.

Working as a wife for the New Zealand church, she also retained contact with women on the field, and supported several of them through difficulties. Twelve years after the death of her first husband, she wrote to the Mission Board:

...I suppose not a month passes, but lam twice addressing a gathering .[and] it is usually on our F[oreign] M[ission] Work. ...I try to carry on the work [that] we [Don and Ruth Alley] undertook together -I will continue always while I am able.

The majority of the women, continued their support through the women's groups within the church. Ada Lee was mission convener on the National Executive of the MWF. Others like Coralie Murray belonged at a local level. Several supported the work by donations and letters.

(b) Other missionaries

Lifelong friendships were made on the mission field. The practice of keeping in contact with colleagues began while the women were still in the Solomons. Often, letters would be sent to friends working on other stations, and missionaries on furlough commonly met and socialised together.

Off the field, several retired missionaries formed themselves into organised groups. The first began in the 1930s. A small collection of men and women performed cabaret-style evenings, at which the ex-missionaries and some home missionaries entertained. In the late 1950s, a more permanent group was established. Instigated by Harry Voyce and Effie Harkness, the group called itself Exes - meaning ex-missionaries. The number of retired missionaries had increased, and many had settled in two main areas, Auckland and Christchurch, making the network viable.

The 'Exes' had two main functions. One was to organise occasional weekend gatherings. The second and more common was to produce a newsletter. The newsletter, which was begun by Merle Carter and Joyce Hall in 1960, contained news of events on the field and kept track of retired workers. Compilation of the newsletter depended on the network of informal contacts. Information was gathered from the correspondence that ex-missionaries continued.

Several ex-missionaries felt that they possessed a special bond with other ex-missionaries, a bond that was not there when they met 'ordinary people'. This is illustrated by the fact that for several years after Davinia and Phil Taylor returned to New Zealand, ex-missionaries were their biggest circle of friends. Similarly, when Beryl Grice married in 1986, she married widower Clary Leadley who had also served in the Solomons. Ironically, Irene and Gordon Cornwell met and socialised with more of their New Zealand colleagues off the field than they had on it. While living on the isolated station of Skotolan on Buka for fifteen years, Irene Cornwell, more so than her husband, rarely saw missionaries from other stations, and visited them even less.

(c) The Solomon Islanders

The Voyces and the Carters all maintained close links with Solomon Islanders through their extended families. When the Voyces returned to New Zealand in 1958, they legally adopted a child they had been fostering since 1950. After being educated at Wesley College, Paerata, he returned to Bougainville. Over a decade later Nancy and George Carter fostered a Solomon Islands girl. Nancy Carter described how she got her third daughter, Elizabeth:

... when Donald... was about six or seven he said to me..., 'Mum, why don't we have another baby?' And I was being very diplomatic and said, '...one day dear, there'll be a baby that needs a mother and we'll have that one.' And George went down to the office that morning (and we had a telephone link between the office and the house) and he rang up...and he said, 'Dear, did you really mean what you said this morning?' And I said, 'What did I say this morning dear?' And he said, 'That you'd have a baby that didn't have a mother, because you 've got one.' And a man had just come to him and said, 'My wife has died in childbirth, and I want you to have the baby. '...And because of that, we have now got this big extended family. All Elizabeth's family, and our family.

Unable to legally adopt Elizabeth Carter, and believing that she should grow up in her own culture, the Carters left her in the care of her uncle when they left the Solomons in 1965. Nancy Carter remembered that decision as being one of the hardest they had to make.

However, it was not uncommon for retired missionaries to make a conscious decision to limit the contact with the Islanders. Several were very aware of tension caused by ex-missionaries instructing those remaining on the field how to do their jobs. Irene Cornwell recalled the conscious decision that she and her husband made:

We've left it for the people to respond to us, believing that the missionary there needed to get on with his own job and not have interference from people who'd been there before. Many of the girls write, and they still write in their language to me...and we respond how we can to their needs....

Another form of contact that was kept, were visits back to the Islands. These became more common in the 1980s. Further contact was maintained by reciprocating the hospitality when Solomon Islanders travelled to New Zealand.

This ongoing contact, both by letter and visits was to be hindered by the blockade of Bougainville by the PNG Government attempting to suppress a secessionist movement there. While this situation arose in 1988, sixteen years after the close of the period, it had an ongoing effect on some of the missionaries. During the first two years of the blockade, there were no means of communicating with friends and family on Bougainville. Nancy Carter felt at a loss when she received a letter from friends there in June of 1991. They were unaware of George Carter's death the previous year. The letter was addressed to him. Beryl Voyce had no knowledge of the well-being of her son and his family until February 1992. It was then that Nancy Carter heard news of him when she returned to the Solomons with her husband's ashes.

The result of the 1988 blockade can be compared to the immediate post-World War II period. When Irene Cornwell first arrived on Buka in 1949, she was shocked at the state of the Petats people who were still recovery from a debilitating war:

...they would share their last meal with you, and all it might be might be potatoes....the teachers would tell you, they hadn't had a meal for two...days. And they'd want to share what they had. The Japs had destroyed everything. They beheaded some of our people, burnt some to death, and destroyed their gardens. They'd killed all the lepers at the leper colony...it was devastating.

Irene Cornwell had spent fifteen years working to lower the infant and maternal death rates and improve nutrition levels on Buka. Recalling her return visit immediately prior to the blockade, she said:

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

We were invited back for a visit [in 1987]....And it was just amazing the difference. The people were fat, whereas [before] they'd been skinny and covered with sores and yaws...and very very thin and malnourished, and had no energy. It was just delightful to see their happy glowing faces...

By the end of 1991, it was claimed there had possibly been as many as 5000 preventable deaths on Bougainville. Over 2000 of these were suggested to have occurred in the first seven months of 1991. Almost half of those 2000 were claimed to be maternity related. They were deaths of a type which the missionaries, particularly the women, had worked to prevent.

Severed contact

Despite the strong impression of a coherent group of ex-missionary women, there were many who did not maintain contact with the mission, their colleagues, or the Solomon Islanders. Often, this was a conscious decision. Disillusioned with their time in the Solomons many became dubious about the effects of the mission. Some were disappointed at the station-based policy. One factor in the 1930 Adkin-Cropp dispute was Vivian Adkin's insistence on village work and the Rev. Cropp's equally determined insistence that she remain on the station. After leaving the mission, Adkin continued nursing, at one stage working for the Flying Doctor service in South Australia. When she did return to New Zealand in 1974, she attended the Salvation Army Church.

For some, the crisis went deeper, and they severed their contact with Christianity. While nursing at Bilua in the early 1930s, Isabel Stringer became disillusioned with the Methodist Church. After she left the Solomons, she converted to the religion of Yoga.

Reflections on the Solomons

The time that the New Zealanders spent in the Solomons had a two-fold effect. Their work not only impacted on the Solomon Islanders, it also had a profound effect on the women themselves. An unbiased analysis of the former is outside the bounds of this study. The nature of the sources restricts this discussion to a look at the New Zealand women's views of their effect on the Islanders. A survey of the latter demonstrates the extent to which the missionaries were themselves affected.

Three areas of influence are apparent in the reflections of the women. First, it was generally felt that the impact of the New Zealand women as a group was greatest amongst the Solomons women. It was often stated that in converting a man, one soul was won for Christ, but in converting a woman, the next generation was influenced. As a result of this belief 'women's work' amongst women was emphasised by both the male and the female missionaries. The wives and the sisters believed that they made a difference to the lives of the Solomons women in the areas of infant and maternal health, education, domestic skills and spiritual growth.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

However, the impact on the Solomons men should not be overlooked. During a return visit to the Islands in the 1980s, Coralie Murray was invited to speak at a Mothers' Day service. She gave a talk on the proper deportment of families, taking the men to task for sitting on the opposite side of the church to the women and children. The affect that she noted was resistance on the part of the older men, but agreement and compliance on the part of the younger ones.

A second observation commonly made, was that many changes instigated by the missionaries were not immediately apparent. Often it took several years for the desired improvements to be noticed; a tendency that was both frustrating and disillusioning. Although the first qualified nurse was appointed in 1922, and immediately began treating Islanders for yaws, it was not until after World War II that the disease was 'eradicated', and even then it was later 'rediscovered'. However, while the affects of mission work were delayed, they also had a cumulative aspect. The position of the Solomons women in the United Church is a case in point. Until 1913 the men on Choiseul did not permit the women to attend church services. By the 1980s throughout the western Solomons women had become the major leadership force in the United Church. The New Zealand women traced this eventual change back to the earliest mission wives who began the first sewing circles, and on whose work later missionaries built.



Lucy Money, Martha Oilavisu, Agnes Asipava, Sylvia Coombe and Lyn Sadler off to Goldie College

The third reflection made was on the prominent positions that mission educated Islanders occupied in Solomons society. In the pre-war era, Methodist pupils were sought after by both the mission and the colonial government. The mission employed the Islanders as teachers and pastors, and as such they formed the largest part of the mission's workforce. The colonial government employed ex-Methodist pupils as clerks and office workers. With independence looming in the post-war era, mission-educated Islanders began to occupy government posts and enter the professions. Pat Hulks noted that when she returned to Bougainville in the 1980s, her pupils of the 1960s had become the 'creme de la creme of Bougainville society'.

Pertinent to this study, is the effect that the mission had on the missionaries themselves. The time that the New Zealand women spent in the Solomons made an impression on each one of them, to a lesser or greater degree. Recalling events of thirty years previously one woman wrote: This brings up some terrible memories that probably should be left buried deep.' Although this woman spent only a short time on the mission field, it left her physically and emotionally drained, and she determined to dissociate herself from that life.

However, not all the women who felt that the mission was misguided, were affected in such a negative manner. Ann Baker had embarked upon a missionary career wanting to give what she had gained from Christianity. Despite feeling that she had been limited by the station-based structure of the mission, she acknowledged the effect that the experience had had on herself and her husband:

...although we were only there [in the Solomons] three years, it broadened our horizons and gave us experiences that have had an ongoing affect.

That the mission experience brought about a change in the missionary herself is a feeling that has been echoed many times. Many women reflect not only upon the impact they made on the Solomon Islanders, but also, the impact the Solomon Islanders made upon them. Myra Fraser, who taught in the Solomons for twenty one years wrote:

I found the time I spent in the Solomon Islands very worthwhile & satisfying. It was a learning experience. I made many mistakes but the people were so gracious & forgiving. They taught me many things. Their deep, simple faith was an inspiration and often put me to shame.

Married women were also aware of how much they had gained. Betty and Dave Buchan worked in the Pacific for seventeen years, six of which they spent in the Solomons and Bougainville. Returning to New Zealand in 1988, Betty Buchan wrote:

People still say 'what a lot we gave up to go overseas' but we gained far more than we ever 'gave up'. It was a privilege to serve God in that place.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Lesley Bowen was appointed to the mission in 1957 as a nursing sister. Despite short periods of time in New Zealand, she remained in the Islands until she retired in 1988. Although she did spend some years in the BSIP, she worked and lived for the most part, on Bougainville. The years she spent there made more than an impact on her life. They were her life:

...I am thankful to God for the privilege of serving among people who had so much to offer & teach me, people who became my people and the land my adopted land..."

Summary

The missionaries worked as self-professed agents of change, yet at the same time they themselves underwent change. Their time in the Solomons had a lasting influence on them. Some chose to continue their missionary careers either in the Solomons or elsewhere. Those women who returned to New Zealand were affected by factors ranging from recurring health problems to the ability to re-adjust culturally. Several took many years to redirect their lives. And while for some, the memories are harsh, and forgotten as quickly as possible, for others, the experience was fundamental to their lives.

Conclusion

This study adds to the literature concerning Europeans who have made a significant impact on the lives of Pacific Islanders. It located, identified and described a select group of women who worked on the Methodist mission in the Solomon Islands between 1922 and 1972. It involved a discussion of such topics as their personal and family backgrounds, the origins of their vocations, the status they were awarded their experiences, their work as missionaries, and their reasons for leaving the mission as well as their subsequent lives.

For women in the Methodist mission official status was determined by marital status. The single women were 'official missionaries' who took responsibility for several areas of mission activity often working beyond the limits of their qualifications. Despite this, they were given an inferior political and financial status in comparison to the men. Generally, the work of the sisters was considered to be of valuable assistance to, rather than a vital part of, the development of the mission. This theme is reiterated with respect to the wives who were even less acknowledged

The lot of the wife was not very different pre-war from what it was post-war in both periods wives were expected to work both in their own fields and as support or the official workers, without receiving any official, political or financial recognition. While the Board in New Zealand expected the wife to provide a model Christian home" and to work amongst the women, they underestimated the actual bond that developed between the married women and the Island women. They did not realise that in Island society, marital status affects the influence that a woman has. Therefore the wives were not only the most unrecognised of the workers, they were also the most underestimated and underutilised, despite making a significant contribution to the work of the mission.

The experiences of these New Zealand women, casts light on what has emerged as a major theme in the colonial history of Melanesia. With regard to fears for the physical safety of white women, this group of New Zealanders had more in common with their nineteenth century counterparts in Papua and Hawaii, than they did with their contemporaries in Papua and Rabaul.

Another major theme in historical writing was uncovered. Studies of women missionaries have been concerned to examine the matter of white women working among Island women, and the common bond of childbirth. In this, it was demonstrated that the women of the Methodist mission were no different from those addressed in other studies. However, the extent and importance of the work amongst the Solomons women does not give cause to omit mention of the work amongst the Solomons men. This study has illustrated that the sisters and the wives worked closely with Island men in the schools, hospitals and in translation work. It emphasised that discussion of the relationships between black men and white women should not be limited to a discussion of physical safety.

The Call of the Solomons by D.N.Beniston

Mission studies have also examined the impact of the missionaries on indigenous populations. This is to be expected as missionaries were overt agents of change. The sources were not available to attempt an in-depth discussion here. What was possible was a brief look at the women's view of their influence on the Islanders. This study also dealt with the often overlooked query of the effect of the mission on the missionaries themselves, and their transition back to 'civilian life'. That that impact was immense offers a new line of enquiry in subsequent writings.

The success of this study is indicative of the informal links that New Zealanders have had with the histories of Pacific nations. In the course of this research, it was not only a group of white women who were located and identified. A considerable wealth of primary material relating to the Pacific was uncovered. Many of these sources - Coralie Murray's transcripts, diaries and letters of Effie Harkness, the letters of Rewa Williamson, and the 'Exes' newsletters - were held in private hands. The amount of Pacific material that exists in New Zealand, indicates that more studies of this nature may be undertaken, to cast light upon the intertwined histories of both Europeans and Pacific Islanders.

Appendix 1

LIST OF THE WOMEN

Mary Addison

Born: 14.7.24
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda, Tonu,
Bilua
relieved at Vella Lavella and
Buka
Era: 1956-6

Vivian Adkin

Born 24.4.1900
Sister, deaconess and nurse
Stationed: Skotolan, Buka
Island
Era: 1928-30
Died: 23.1.86

Ruth Alley

Born: 6.9.1913
Wife - husband Rev. Don
Alley
Stationed: Teop,
Bougainville
Era: 1936-42

W. Ann Baker nee Harris

Born: 17.2.34
Wife, teacher - husband
Robert
(Bob) Baker
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1958-61

Nancy Ball

Born: 8.2.27
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Sasamuqa, Munda
Era: 1950-60
Died: 28.9.90

Jeanette Barker, nee Laws

Born: 12.11.33
Wife - husband Rev. Peter
Baker
Stationed: Kekesu,
Bougainville
Era: 2.2.63-27.7.63

May Barnett

Born: 29.6.1886
Sister, deaconess
Stationed: Munda, Bilua
Era: 1922-32
Died: 7.9.76

Maria June (May) Bartle

Born: 21.2.1905
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Bilua
Era: 1932-34
Died: 15.11.76

Pamela Beaumont

Born: 7.4.28
Mission Sister, teacher
(ordained as Deaconess 1968)
Stationed: Koau, Tonu,
Munda, Bilua, Buin
Era: 1951-75

Constance Bensley, nee Olds

Born: 19.6.1885
Sister, deaconess
Stationed: Roviana, Bilua
Era: 1919-22
Wife - husband Rev. A.A.
Bensley
Stationed: Bilua
Era: 1922-34
Died: 18.7.64

Lilian Berry

Born: 26.2.1890
Sister, nurse, deaconess
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1922-33
Died: 28.3.81

Rosemary Bettany

Bom: 6.10.36
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Tonu, Roreinag
Era: 1964-67

Bernice Birch

Born: 7.8.36
Sister, pharmacist, (1st year
OSS).
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1961-64

L. Jane Bond

Born: 26.1.21
Sister, nurse and deaconess
Stationed: Munda, Bilua
Era: 1950-54
Died: 13.9.86

Lesley Bowen

Born: 11.12.29
Sister, nurse (Deaconess
training 1971)
Stationed: Munda, Skotolan,
Bilua.
Kekesu, Tonu
Era: 1957-60, 61-64, 68-88

Joan Brooking

Born: 10.11.29
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Koau
Era: 1950-53

Catherine Brough, nee Clifford

Born: 31.8.35
Wife, teacher - husband Rev.
Gordon Brough
Stationed: Kekesu
Era 1959-61

Irene Brown, nee Crespin

Born: ca 1896
Wife - husband Rev. Hubert
G. Brown
Stationed: Teop
Era: ca 1926-27
Died: 17.3.44

Audrey Bruce, nee Highnam

Born: 7.10.33
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda, Choiseul
Era: 1957-63
Wife - husband Rev.
Maxwell Bruce
Stationed: Vella Lavella,
Bougainville
Era: 1969-76

**Elizabeth (Betty) Buchan, nee
Jenkins**

Bom: 11.10.38
Wife - husband David
Buchan, plantation
manager
Stationed: Ulu, Kihili,
Wanigela, Deos,
Tulaen (PNG), Banga
Era: 1966-72 (returned to
work in PNG, 1978-87)

Vera Cannon

Born: 24.6.1908
Sister, nurse Stationed:
Munda
Stationed: Bougainville,
Choiseul
Era: 1934-42
Died: 30.7.89

Merle Carter

Born: 27.6.1919
Sister, nurse (post-graduate
certificate of Tropical
Medicine '57)
Stationed: Bougainville
Era: 1947-60

Nancy Carter, nee Scott

Born: 28.3.28
Wife, teacher - husband Rev.
George Carter
Stationed: Koau, Kekesu,
Munda
Era: 1949-65

Gladys Chivers, nee Blayney

Born: not known
Wife - husband Frank
Chivers, technician
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1922-27
Died: 8.4.27 .

Davinia Clark, see Taylor

Nancy Cochrane, nee Daffin

Bom: 30.9.44
Wife - husband H. Graeme
Cochrane
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1971-72

Elizabeth Common

Born: 8.4.1889
Sister, deaconess and nurse
Stationed: Munda,
Bougainville
Era: 1923-42
Died: 12.3.46

Irene Cornwell, nee Shoosmith

Born: 21.11.24
Wife, nurse - husband Rev.
Gordon Cornwell
Stationed: Buka
Era: 1949-62

Shona Couch

Born- 9.7.39
Sister, clerical
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1963-65

Dianne Crooks, nee Dobby

Born - 22.3.44
Wife - husband David
Crooks, secretary
Stationed: Munda
Era 1966 67

Meriel Cropp, nee Beaumont

Born: 7.9.34
Wife, teacher - husband Rev.
Jim Cropp
Stationed: Munda
Era 1962-71

Jean Dalziel

Born: 24.1.1891
Sister, deaconess
Stationed: Choiseul, Munda
Era- 1925-30

Thelma Duthie

Born: 28.2.31
Sister, teacher
Stationed: kekesu, Tonu
Era 1952-64
Died - 4.9.89

Dorothy Dyson

Born: 30.6.36
Wife, nurse - husband Hugh
Dyson, business manager
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1967-70, (returned post
72)

Merle Farland

Born: 26.2.1906
Sister - nurse
Stationed: Bilua
Era 1938-42
Died: 21.5.88

Jenny Field, nee Shaw

Bom: 16.1.47
Wife - husband Eion
Kenwyn, station manager
Stationed: Tonu
Era: 1969-71, (returned
post'7 2)

Audrey Fleury, nee Roberts

Born: 25.6.33
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda, Choiseui
Era: 1958-61
Wife - husband Rodney
Fleury, plantation
manager
Era: 1962-68

Myra Fraser

Born: 3.10.18
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Munda, Bilua
Era: 1950-71

Mavis Garside, nee Fordyce

Born: 10.1.37
Wife - husband Rev. Paul
Garside
Stationed: Roviana, Honiara
Era: 1965-68

Patricia Gatman, nee Carins

Born: 30.11.29
Wife, teacher - husband John
Gatman, engineer
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1958-64
Died: 3.5.86

Jessie Grant

Born: 6.12.26
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Choiseui, Munda
Era: 1950-57

Ruth Grant

Born: 5.12.1908
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1931-34

Norma Graves

Born: 17.9.30
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Minda, Buka,
Kekesu, Vella Lavella
Era: 1954-65, (1966-72 New
Guinea)
Died: 11.11.89

Beryl Gray

Born: 1.8.44
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1966-70

Audrey Grice

Born: 24.11.33
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Munda, Bilua,
Buka, Sasamuqa
Era: 1956-65

Beryl Grice

Born: 24.11.33
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Munda, Tonu,
Sasamuqa, Vonunu
Era: 1957-59, 1960-72

Joyce Hall

Born: 19.2.23
Wife, nurse - husband Rev.
Allen Hall
Stationed: Banga Island
Era: 1951-61

Effie Harkness

Born: 12.2.1909
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Munda, Bilua
Era: 1937-42, 1945-57

Audrey Highnam, see Bruce

June Hilder

Born: 16.6.24
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Roviana, Buka,
Kieta
Era: 1951-62
Died: 3.3.78

Elinore Horrill, nee Hancock

Born: 10.10.36
Wife - husband Rev. C. Seton
Horrill
Stationed: Teop
Era: 1966-68

Patricia Hulks

Born: 19.10.30
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Buka
Era: 1961-68

Patricia Jacobson

Born: 3.11.36
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Kihili
Era: 1962-71

Florrie James, nee Heward

Born: 16.1.1897
Wife, teacher - husband Dr
Clifford James
Stationed: Sasamuqa
Era: 1929-32
Died: 16.2.1975

Lina Jones

Born: 2.3.1890
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Munda, Bilua
Era: 1924-42. 1945-49
Died: 11.6.79

Alison Kehely, nee Hall

Born: 13.6.41
Wife - husband Terry
Kehely, engineer
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1964-68 (returned post
72)

Gladys Larkin

Born: 10.2.31
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda, Skotland
Era: 1960-69

E.F. Amy Leadley, nee Coombridge

Born: 4.2.1907
Wife, nurse and pharmacist –
husband Rev. E.C. Leadley
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1934-42, 1966-68
Died: October '84

Ada Lee

Born: 1.6.1909
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Munda, Kihili
Era: 1934-42, 1946-48, 1952-
66

Mavis Luxton, nee Carter

Born: 19.1.1906
Wife - husband Rev. C.T.J.
Luxton
Stationed: Buka
Era: 1939-42, 1945-48

Muriel McConnack

Born: 1.5.26
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Sasamuqa
Era: 1963-71

Alice McDonald, nee McMillan

Born: 4.12.16
Wife - husband Rev. D.I.
Alistair McDonald
Stationed: Choiseul
Era: 1952-63

Grace McDonald

Born: 26.11.1903
Sister, deaconess, nurse
Stationed: Munda, Sasamuqa
Era: 1927-34, 1939-42, 1945-
50
Died: 30.8.89

Joyce McDonald, see Sides

Margaret McKerras, nee Donald

Born: 9.12.44
Wife, nurse - husband Bruce
McKerras, builder
Stationed: Kieta
Era: 1967-69

Mavis M,annall nee Morgan

Born: 12.7.29
Wife - husband Robert
Mannell, engineer
Stationed: Koau, Munda
Era: 1952-58

Lucy Money

Born: 28.7.16
Sister, deaconess, nurse,
kindergarten teacher
Stationed: Choiseul
Era: 1947-97

Olive Money

Born: 8.6.13
Sister, secretary
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1954-56

Maureen Moor, nee Allen

Bom: 21.9.41
Wife, occupational therapist
– husband Denis Moor,
engineer
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1968-71
Died: 29.9.87

Laureen Joy Munro, nee Oneill

Bom: 6.3.45
Wife - husband Kenneth
Munro, teacher
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1968-71

Coralie Murray

Born: 4.1.1901
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Sasamuqa
Era: 1929-31

Gwendolyn Nagel, nee Townsend

Born: 20.5.46
Wife, teacher - husband John
Nagel,plantation worker
Stationed: Kihili, Skotolan
Era: 1969-71

Norma Neutze

Bom: 10.1.30
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1955-59

Constance Olds, see Bensley

Janice Palmer

Bom: 8.11.36
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Skotolan
Era: 1962-65

Jean Palmer, nee Simpkin

Born: 26.7.24
Wife, deaconess - husband
Chris Palmer, mechanic
Stationed: Koau
Era: 1949-51

Vivienne Parton

Born: 10.11.38
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Bilua, Kekesu,
Munda, Buka
Era: 1961-64

Stella Pavey, nee Drew

Born: 4.4.20
Wife - husband Gordon
Pavey, business
manager
Stationed: Skotolan, Kieta
Era: 1965-70

Frances Pentelow, nee Laurenson

Bom: 21.9.41
Wife - husband Don
Pentelow, builder
Stationed: Munda, Salamo
Era: 1968-75

Winifred Poole

Born: 28.7.17
Sister, nurse, deaconess
Stationed: Skotolan,
Sasamuqa, Bilua (and
Ozama Island)
Era: 1946-54

Beulah Reeves

Born: 6.2.31
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Kihili
Era: 1956-60

Phyllis Rudolph

Born: 16.10.31
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Sasamuqa, Bilua,
Munda, Skotolan
Era: 1957-62

Elizabeth (Betty) Rutter

Born: not known
Wife, bacteriologist -
husband Dr Alan Rutter
Stationed: Bilua
Era: 1938-42

Lyn Sadler

Born: 21.8.39
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Banga Island
Era: 1964-78

Ada Saunders

Born: not known
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1923-24

Eva Saunders

Born: 6.1.16
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Bilua, Skotolan
Era: 1948-53

Jean Sayers

Born: not known
Wife - husband Dr Ted
Sayers
Stationed: Munda, Bilua
Era: 1927-34

Eileen Schick

Born: 7.5.42
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Kihili, Munda
Era: 1967-75

Kathleen Shaw

Born: 17.9.27
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Kekesu
Era: 1960-66

Gloria Shepherd, nee Pickford

Born: 11.3.22
Wife, nurse - husband Rev.
Trevor Shepherd
Stationed: Kekesu, Bilua
Era: 1947-56

Joyce Sides, nee McDonald

Born: 20.9.25
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Bilua
Era: 1949-52
Wife - husband Rev. Brian
Sides
Stationed: Skotolan, Hutjena
Kieta
Era: 1963-68

Moyna Silvester, nee Haddock

Born: 19.5.1908
Wife - husband Rev. Wattie
Silvester
Stationed: Bilua
Era: 1935-Jan '42, 1945-52
Died: 27.12.86

Barbara Smith, nee Mullin

Born: 15.7.37
Wife - husband Bruce Smith,
business manager
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1962-66

Muriel Stewart

Born: ca 1902
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Sasamuqa
Era: 1927-32

Isabel Stringer

Born: 15.5.1905
Sister, nurse
Stationed Bilua
Era: 1932-34

Davinia Taylor, nee Clark

Bom: 9.8.27
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Buka, Roviana,
Bilua, Kekesu, Marovo,
Vella Lavella
Era: 1950-56
Wife - husband Rev. Philip
Taylor
Stationed: Banga Island,
Kihili, Tonu
Era: 1958-67

Gwenyth Taylor, nee Hills

Born: 18.7.38
Wife - husband Rev. Kerry
Taylor
Stationed: Tonu
Era: 1961-69

Joy Thompson

Born: 8.2.28
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Bilua, Ozama

Margaret Tucker

Bom: 3.8.43
Wife, teacher - husband Rev.
Geoff Tucker
Stationed: Honiara
Era: 1969-74

Beryl Voyce

Born: 10.9.1899
Wife - husband Rev. Harry
Voyce
Stationed: Bougainville
Era: 1926-58

Esther Watson

Bom: 13.5.35
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Kekesu
Era: 1963-69
Died: 18.3.83

Sheena Watson, nee Waddell

Born: 5.10.22
Wife, nurse - husband Rev.
Alec Watson
Stationed: Roviana, Vella
Lavella, Honiara
Era: 1956-66

Edna White

Born: 31.1.1902
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda, Bilua,
Bougainville,
Choiseuil
Era: 1927-32, 1936-38, 1955,
1962
Died: 2.9.87

Lily White

Bom: 23.11.1890
Sister, deaconess, nurse
Stationed: Bilua, Sengga
Era: 1926-28
Died: 9.3.67

Joy Whitehouse

Born: not known
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Bilua
Era: 1938-48
Died: 8.12.84

Helen Whitlow

Born: 7.4.22
Sister, teacher
Stationed: Buka
Era: 1952-54

Rewa Williamson

Bom: 30.1.31
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda, Kelesu
Era: 1953-60

Beverly Withers

Born: 11.5.39
Sister, nurse
Stationed: Munda, relieved at
Bilua, Kekesu, Tonu,
Skotolan
Era: 1964-68

Nelma Woodfield, nee Henderson

Born: 20.10.28
Wife, nurse - husband Rev.
Frank Woodfield
Stationed: Munda
Era: 1951-55

Averil Yearbury, nee Harris

Born: 12.4.30
Wife, teacher - husband
Gearge Yearbury,
Builder
Stationed: Bougainville
Era: 1949-52